

ELEVEN
SERMONS
Preached before and after
THE
CELEBRATION
OF THE
Lord's Supper.

By Mr. WALTER DOUGLAS Minister of the Gospel at Lintoun.



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T O

The Right Honourable,

J E A N,

Lady Cranstoun,

THE FOLLOWING

DISCOURSES

Are most humbly Dedicated by,

Her Ladyship's

Most Obliged, and sincerely

Devoted Servant,

WALTER DOUGLAS.



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TO THE READER.

Christian Reader,

EVery one must own, that the devout Participation of the holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, is one of the most necessary and profitable Parts of the Christian's Work: For as nothing doth more contribute to our Establishment in Grace, and our abounding in the Comforts of Religion; so, there is not any Thing that more strengthens us for our Christian Work and Warfare, nor fortifies us better against Temptations, and Trials, nor qualifies us more for bearing every Burden, that the Divine Providence thinks fit to lay upon us. The Ministers of the Gospel, whose Work it is to instruct the People of God, and to edify the Body of Christ, are, by Virtue of their Office, bound to contribute their utmost Endeavours, to assist the Lord's People in their Devotion, and to direct 'em in their Conversation.

These, I can say, were my End, first in preaching, and now in publishing the following Discourses. In the first two of them, I have endeavoured (under the Divine Conduct) to represent the matchless and wonderful Love of Christ in dying for us, and to set it in such a Light, as, if duly considered, cannot but have a very happy and powerful Influence upon the Hearts of the Readers, and produce the blessed Fruits of Holiness in their Lives. In the next two, I hope, I
may

may say, I have explained somewhat of the Nature of drawing near unto God in holy Duties; and particularly, how this is to be done in the Sacrament of the Supper; and likewise described how much it is our Interest, to draw near unto him. In the fifth and and sixth, I have made it my Business to show, wherein the Exercise of serious and practical Godliness consists, and how profitable it is to us, in all our valuable Concerns. The next four Sermons contain many useful and necessary Rules, for the Conduct of the Christian's Life. And as for the last of them, it shews, what is our Quality and Condition in the World, and what our Deportment should be, considering that we are Strangers in the Earth.

This, in short, is the Scope of these Sermons. The Subject of 'em is doubtless most Sublime and Excellent: I wish I could say, the Performance were answerable. However, such as it is, I have ventured it abroad the World; and I hope it may, by the Blessing of God, be some Way Useful to the serious and attentive Reader, whom I shall not detain any longer in the Preface. And so recommending this little Book, and the Christian Reader, to God, and to the Word of his Grace, which is able to stablish and to build up his People,

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I am, &c,

WALTER DOUGLAS.



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S E R.



SERMON I.

The Love of God in laying
down his Life for us.

I J O H. iii. 16.

*Hereby perceive we the Love of God, be-
cause he laid down his Life for us.*



ANY and remarkable
are the Instances of
the Divine Goodness
towards the Chil-
dren of Men: But
here is the most illust-
rious of all; *God laid
down his Life for us:*
And if this does not
convince us of his

Love, what can do it? That ever the most
high God should have discovered the least
Degree of Friendship towards fallen Man, who
had rebelled against him, and by his Apostacy
had so justly forfeited all Favour and Kindness
from

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from him, is truly wonderful and surprising Love; and shews him to be indeed a God in whom Compassions flow: But that he should give us such a notable Instance of his Love, as that which the Apostle mentions in the Text, namely, his *laying down his Life for us*; this is, indeed, wonderful Love, marvellous Condescension, unparalleled Kindness, and Goodness truly Divine.

For God to have bestow'd so much as common Favours upon his rebellious Enemies, who had rendered themselves obnoxious to the utmost of his Wrath, even to everlasting Misery and Torments, had been exceeding much, and what might have filled our Souls with Admiration: But he has raised his Love to a Pitch infinitely greater; not only in condescending to a perfect Reconciliation with us, and that at a Time when we were in actual Rebellion against him; but likewise in devising such stupendious Means for accomplishing this Reconciliation, even *Christ's laying down his precious Life for us*. I remember our blessed Lord speaking of this wonderful Love, describes it to be the highest Degree, that the Divine Love could arrive at, while he says *For God so loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting Life*.

John 3.
16.

In the Words read, you may consider these three Things. (1.) The Person who thus loved us. He was not a mere Man, nor was he one of the Angels; neither was he any other mere Creature, how pure and perfect soever: But 'twas God himself, even *Christ the eternal Son of God, who is God equal with the Father, and God*

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God over all, blessed for evermore. The intimate Union between the Divine and Humane Natures, in *Christ*, gives the *Apostle* Ground to call *Christ's* Life as Man, the Life of God, even as his Blood is else-where called the *Blood of God*: *Feed the Church of God* (says the *Apostle*, in his Advice to the Elders of *Ephesus*) *which he hath purchased with his own Blood.* (2.) The Persons Acts 20: 28.

whom God thus loved: *He loved Us.* *Us*, who were not capable to do any Thing for our own Relief; and had undoubtedly perished for ever, unless he had come to save us. *Us*, who were not seeking after him, but contrariwise were flying from him: *Us*, who were so far from deserving his Love, that indeed we deserved nothing but Wrath, and the Extremity of Wrath. (3.) Here is the Way how he was graciously pleased to express his Love; and this was done after a most surprising and wonderful Manner: *He laid down his Life for us.* The Meaning is, he most freely, and with the greatest Cheerfulness parted with his most precious Life, to ransom us from Hell and Wrath, and to purchase eternal Salvation for us. He did not *redeem us with corruptible Things, such as Silver and Gold, or the like*; but with that 1 Pet. 1: 18, 19. which is infinitely more valuable than all the precious Things in the World; even with his own Blood, one Drop of which is of far greater Worth than Ten thousand Worlds.

I have now done with the general Explication of my Text, and shall proceed to discourse more fully, concerning that particular Instance of the Divine Love mentioned therein. In the Prosecution whereof I shall, thro' the Divine Conduct,

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I. Show you, That Christ's Love in dying for us, was truly great and surprising.

II. Give you an Account of some of the Properties or Qualities of this Love.

III. By Way of Application, I shall enquire what Influence the Consideration of this Love, this wonderful Love of Christ in dying for us, should have upon us.

That I may set this Love in a true Light, and convince you that it is really great and surprising, I shall do these two Things. (1.) I shall consider Christ's Act of dying. (2.) The Persons for whom he died.

As to Christ's Act of dying for us, you may consider these following Particulars. *First*, Take Notice of the Kind of Death which he suffered. He did not die a *natural*, but a *violent* Death, even the Death of the Cross: Had he died a *natural* Death for us, even that had been a wonderful Instance of Love: But doubtless it greatly inhanseth his Love, and makes it yet the more wonderful and surprising, that he died a *violent* Death; and such a Death as that of the Cross is; concerning which you may take these following Observations.

1. The Death of the Cross was a most bitter and painful Death; neither could it be otherwise: For they who died on the Cross, had their Hands and their Feet, those sensible Parts of the Body, pierced through with Nails: They had their Arms and Legs stretched to such a Degree, as really to put their Bones out of Joint, that so they might reach the Parts they were fastned to. Hence the holy Psalmist prophesying of Christ, brings him in complaining thus, *All my Bones are out of Joint.*

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And in this miserable Condition they were forced to hang unmoveable, not being able to turn themselves any Way for Ease. It can scarce be imagined, how much Torment and Pain a Man in these unhappy Circumstances endured: For the Weight of his Body enlarg'd the Wounds which the Nails had made; rent asunder the Veins and Nerves, and made the Blood gush out more and more abundantly. So that, in this Case, the longer a Man was in dying, the more was his Pain and Misery encreased. But besides those Pains in his Body, he suffered also Agonies in his Soul: For now it was that the envenomed Arrows of his Father's Wrath were made to pierce Christ's Heart; (I mean when he hung upon the Cross), which occasioned that doleful Complaint, *My God, Matth. my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* The vindictive Wrath of God was now inflam'd to the full, and he would not abate his own beloved Son the least Mite of that Debt, which he had undertaken to pay for the Elect World.

2. The Death of the Cross was a *slow*, and *lingering Death*, as well as *bitter* and *painful*: For they that died on the Cross, did not die immediately, but were a long Time in dying; sometimes two Days, as the *Historian* relates concerning the *Apostle Andrew*. Our Lord Jesus Christ was indeed only *three Hours* on the Cross; which, yet, was a long Time to remain under such exquisite Torment, as he must needs have endured, during that Space. But his Death was hastned by his supernatural Power: And therefore we are told, his being so short a Time on the Cross before, he expired, was look'd upon as an extraordinary.

Mark 15
44

nary Thing, and what had but seldom or never happened: 'Tis said of *Pontius Pilate*, that he marvelled when he heard that *Christ* was already dead; tho', I say, he had then been three Hours on the Cross, and did not give Credit to it, till he had called the *Centurion* that attended at the Execution, and asked at him, whether it were so or not. He marvelled that *Christ* was already dead: 'Twas a Surprize to him, that one whom he had observed to have a more than ordinary Vigour, should so soon yield to Death. There was a special Providence in this, that *Pilate* should be so strict in examining into this Particular, that there might be no Pretence to say, he was buried alive, and so to take away the Truth of his Resurrection: And so fully was this determined, that that Objection was never once started.

I say then, the Death of the Cross was a slow and lingering Death; And when Death comes, the slower is its Pace, the heavier certainly is its Tread. And this was truer of *Christ*, than of any other that ever died this Kind of Death: For other Men, when they are long in dying, they usually faint, and their Spirits gradually abate: They are, as it were, brought Step by Step to Death's Door, and are many Times, in a Manner, dead, before Death comes. But it was otherwise with *Christ*: For all the while he was on the Cross, before he expired, he was in perfect Strength; the Vigour and Acuteness of his Senses was not a whit blunted, even to the last Moment of his Life; which, I confess, is very wonderful, considering his dreadful Agony in the Garden, where he was made

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to sweat drops of Blood, and how barbarously they had used him, before they led him forth to be crucified. The Evangelist Mark, says of him, *that he cried with a loud Voice, and then gave up the Ghost:* And when the Centu-
Mark 15. 34, 39.
 rion that stood over against him, saw that he cried, and gave up the Ghost, he said, *Truly this Man was the Son of GOD!* At first View one would think, this was a strange Inference, an odd Way of reasoning; this Man dies, and gives up the Ghost, therefore he is the Son of God, and that the Argument was rather strong on the contrary Side. But here lies the Strength of the Argument: *When he saw, that he so cried out and then died he said, he was the Son of GOD.* He knew, that in other Men, their Strength leisurely abates, their Speech grows low, and they usually falter, and rattle in their Throats: But as for this Man, he sent forth such a strong Cry at the very last Gasps, as he had never heard before from one in his Circumstances: And therefore he justly inters, *Truly this Man was the Son of GOD.* That one who was ready to give up the Ghost, should be able to cry out so, could not but be surprizing and amazing, to any that consider'd it.

3. It was also a most *Disgraceful* and *ignominious Death*, such as none but Slaves and the vilest Malefactors were condemned to suffer. And such did our Lord's Enemies reckon him, wherein that Scripture was fulfilled, which saith, *and he was numbred among the Transgressors.* And that his Enemies might
Isa. 53. 12.
 fall on the greater Disgrace upon him in his Death, there were two Thieves crucified with him; on either Side one. Here they placed him,

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him, because they would have the World believe, he was the Ring-leader and Encourager of such Wretches. Now, you know, to a noble and generous Mind, there's nothing more uneasy and tormenting, nothing more cutting and galling, than Shame and Disgrace: In this Respect, the Ignominy of one Death is more intolerable than the Pain of an hundred Deaths would be. In some Sense, the Malefactors that suffered with him, far'd much better than he: For we read of no Derision, no Inscription, no Taunts, no Reflections, no Sarcasms that were cast upon them. They had only Pain to suffer; but our blessed Lord had both Pain and Shame to encounter: And yet he endured all with admirable Patience; *he endured the Cross, despising the Shame.*

Heb. 12.
2.

The Cross was the Death of Slaves; no free Man, nor any Man of Fashion, was condemned to suffer this Death. And yet Christ not only underwent this vile, this ignominious and reproachful Death, but he was sold to it: And a goodly Price it was that he was valued at; *thirty Pieces of Silver.* All the Time he was on the Cross, he hung naked: And you know Nakedness is our Shame. Thieves and notorious Villans were crucified with him, and he placed in the Middle between them, as if he had been really worse than both of 'em. He was mocked and derided on all Hands; and *they did shake their Heads at him, saying, Ah! thou that destroyest the Temple, and buildest it in three Days, come down from the Cross, if thou be the Son of GOD: He saved others, himself he cannot save.* And all this was acted without the Gates of Jerusalem: They would

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not suffer him to die within the Walls of their City, lest forsooth it had been thereby polluted. Well then might the Sun in the Firmament withdraw its Light and mask itself in Darkness, as blushing to behold *the Sun of Righteousness* hanging upon a Cross, between two Thieves. You know it was reckoned no small Disgrace, for the Sons of Saul to be *hanged on a Tree*: How much Ignominy was it then for the Son of GOD, the Lord of Life and Glory, ~~to~~ *to hang upon a Tree*, between two notorious Malefactors!

4. It was likewise a *curfed Death*. Tho' Pain be indeed bad, and Shame much worse, yet the *Curse* is worst of all. You know 'tis written in the Scriptures, *he that is hanged, is accursed of God!* Deut. 21.
'Tis true, this was only a ceremonial Curse: But withal 'twas typical, and had a special Reference to Christ, who was under a real and a moral Curse for us: And so it is applied by the Apostle, when he says, *Christ hath redeemed us from the Curse of the Law, being made a Curse for us: For it is written, cursed is every one that is hanged on a Tree.* Gal. 3.
The Providence of God did so order Things, that Christ should die this cursed Death, that thereby it might be made evident, that in his Death he bare the Curse that was due to us for our Sins, and which otherwise had, most certainly, destroyed us. The Apostle Peter, speaking of Christ to the Jews, says, *Whom ye slew and hanged on a Tree:* AA, 4.
Intimating, that slaying him was not so bad, as hanging him on a Tree. It was utterly impossible for us to satisfy the Law of God which we had broken, and to answer all the Demands of his Justice.

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Justice which we had offended; but we must of Necessity have suffered everlasting Punishment, unless Christ had stepped in, and taken the Curse upon himself. Such an execrable Death was the Death of the Cross reckon'd, That Constantine the Great made a Law, That no Christian should die on a Cross, whatever his Crime was. 'Tis related by the Evangelist John, in the History of Christ's Sufferings, that when he was going to wrestle with that dreadful Agony in the Garden, he passed over the Brook Cedron. And if you'll consult the History of the Kings, you will find that when any of the Godly Kings of Judah, such as Hezekiah, Asa and Josiah, reformed the Land, and purged the Temple and Kingdom from Idolatry, they cast the abominable and accursed things into the Brook Cedron. Christ was to drink of the Brook in the Way, as the Psalmist foretold of him: He was to wade through a whole River, nay, a whole Ocean of most dreadful Curses for our sake.

II. Christ suffered this painful, this lingering, this shameful and cursed Death, so patiently for us, as is another Evidence of the greatness of his Love. He endured much Pain and Shame, and really met with the worst, the vilest, the most barbarous and inhumane Usage, that perhaps we ever read of; and yet he endured all with wonderful Patience: Nothing they either said or did to him, could extort so much as one rash or passionate Word from his gracious Mouth. For when he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. He never resisted, he never rebelled,

Joh. 18.
6.

Psal. 110.
7.

1 Pet. 2.
23.

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rebelled, he never opposed; but (to use the Prophet's Words) *As a Sheep before his Shearers* Isa. 53. *is dumb, so he opened not his Mouth.* Not as if 7. he had spoken none at all: But the Meaning is, he was silent as to Murmurings and Revilings; that was the Work of his Persecutors. Tho' his Enemies reproached him to his Face, calling him a Drunkard, a Glutton, a Friend of Publicans and Sinners, a Sabbath-breaker, an Impostor, a Blasphemer, a Deceiver of the People, a Devil, and indeed what not? Yet these sharp Arrows of theirs did not recoil upon 'em. Not so much as one Word past from him, that argued either Passion or Impatience: For *he was brought as a Lamb to the slaughter.* He was not exasperated nor 7. enraged, by all the Injustice and Cruelty of his Enemies. When Judas the Traitor, one of his own twelve Disciples, came upon him with a Company from the High Priests and Rulers of the People, with Swords and Staves, to apprehend him in the Garden; Friend (says he) *betrayest thou the Son of Man with a Kiss?* Luke 22. 40. This was indeed a Check to Judas; and Christ's calling him *Friend*, was doubtless a very sharp Rebuke to him, for his unfriendly Carriage to his Lord and Master: Yet there was a great deal of Meekness and Modesty in it too. Nay, so far was he from giving his Enemies ill Words, in Return for their provoking Language, and insolent Cruelty towards him; that he returned 'em Prayers in exchange for their Revilings, and in a Manner excused their Crime in murdering him. You'll find him extenuating their Guilt, by imputing it to their Ignorance: *Father* (says he)

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22.

Luke 22. he) *forgive them; for they know not what they do.* This was indeed an high, a noble and heroick Piece of Patience, to pour out his fervent Prayers for them, that were such busy Instruments, in pouring out his Blood, and taking away his Life in such a barbarous Manner. Never any suffered what he suffered: And yet he was content, nay, even desirous that God's Will should be fulfilled in every Point, and our Salvation accomplished, tho' it should put him to endure never so much.

44.

III. He laid down his Life for us, most cheerfully and willingly, which is another pregnant Evidence of the Greatness of his Love to us. He was not driven, like the legal Sacrifices to the Altar: For the most bitter and cruel of his Enemies were not more desirous to take away his Life, than he was desirous to part with it for our sake. Hence, speaking to his Disciples of his Death, he says, *I have a Baptism to be baptized with, and how am I strained till it be accomplished?* And again, *I lay down my Life, no Man taketh it from me; but I lay it down of my self.* With the greatest Cheerfulness did he undertake the Work of our Redemption, tho' he knew perfectly what it would stand him; and he went through all that he was either to do or suffer for us, with the greatest Pleasure and Satisfaction imaginable. Nay, he was content to suffer any Thing, rather than the Elect, or any of them should perish. When Peter drew his Sword in Christ's Quarrel, and struck off the right Ear of Malchus, one of the Servants of the High Priest, our Lord rebuked him for his rash Zeal. *Thinkest thou not (says he) that I can pray*

Luke 12.

30.

Joh. 10.

12.

Mat. 26.

53.

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pray to my Father, and he shall quickly give me more than twelve Legions of Angels? As if he had said, it were easy for me to fall upon a speedy Method, effectually to escape the Hands of my Enemies, were I not really as ready to die, as they are greedily thirsting for my Life. At another Time, when he had been speaking to his Disciples of his Death, Peter began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee. You'll see how our Lord resented this: For he turned, and said unto Peter, get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an Offence unto me; for thou savourest not the Things that be of God, but those that be of Men.

Mat. 16:
23, 24.

When his Enemies came to apprehend him in the Garden, tho' he knew their Errand, he went out boldly to them, and said, *Whom seek ye?* And upon their answering, *we seek Jesus of Nazareth*, he told them, *I am he.* I am the Person whom ye seek. Upon which they went backward, and fell to the Ground, as if they had been Thunder-struck. Now, surely he that spoke them to the Ground, could as easily have spoke them quite dead upon the Spot: Nay, he could have spoke them to Hell, had he pleased, and sent them the nearest Way thither; as he did *Korah, Dathan and Abiram*, and their wicked Company. Well, they having by the divine Permission got up again, Christ repeats his former Question to them, *Whom seek ye?* And when they still told him, *we seek Jesus of Nazareth*, his Answer was, *I have told you that I am he.* You see, he went out to his Enemies, and met them, when he knew they were come pur-

Joh. 18:
4, 5, 6, 7, 8,

Joh. 6.
15.

purposely to apprehend him, and to put him to Death: And he in a Manner reached forth his Hand, to take the bitter Cup, to shew his Willingness to suffer and die for us. At another Time, when the People would have forced him to a Crown, and offered to make him a King, he *withdrew himself*; But now, when they were come to force him to a Cross, you see, he did not decline it, but most willingly offered himself; for he came into the World, purposely to suffer and die for his People.

But perhaps it will be objected here, that Christ feared Death, and prayed against it, saying, *If it be possible, let this Cup pass from me*. I answer, This does not contradict, but rather evidence his Willingness to die. For Christ may be considered, either as a private Person, of the same Natural Affections, Desires and Abhorrences with other Men, and so the bitter Cup was justly feared and declined: And he must also be considered as a publick Person, standing in a publick Station, as our Mediator, and coming in our Place; and so he most willingly submitted to it, when he said, *not my Will, but thine be done*. And certainly his Willingness, considered as standing in our Room, and in this publick Station and Capacity, was so much the greater, and the more remarkable; because, considered as a private Person, he could not but have a strong Reluctancy against it.

IV. Christ's End and Intention in laying down his Life for us; does not a little heighten his Love in dying for us. He laid down his precious Life, to be a Sacrifice for our Sins,

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to appease the Wrath of God, that was incensed against us, and which we our selves could not give Satisfaction to; and to purchase our Peace with God, by slaying the Enmity which was betwixt us. It was to procure us Victory over Satan, over Sin, over the World, over our selves, over Death, and over all the other Enemies of our Salvation: It was to redeem us from Hell and Wrath, to bring us unto God, and to make us Heirs of Heaven and eternal Salvation; that *Inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away.* This was, I say, his *End* in dying for us; and by his Death he really purchased all these Things for his People. These are indeed most valuable Privileges, noble Purchases, and ye are called to remember them in the *Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*; and to be sure you should remember them, with the utmost Thankfulness: For where had we been? Or what had become of us, if the Son of God had not come into the World, and laid down his Life for us? Verily we had been all in the same deplorable and hopeless Condition with the Angels that fell, who are reserved under Chains in Darkness, unto the Judgment of the last Day, as the Apostle Jude speaks. This is a Subject that can't but be both pleasant and profitable to meditate upon; a Subject that will at once nourish and delight our Souls. These are Things, I say, which we should remember with the utmost Thankfulness: Our Souls and all that is within us should be stirred up, to magnify the Riches of this divine, this wonderful and matchless Love; to bless him that hath so loved us; and

1 Pet. 1:

Jude 6:

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SERM. I

and it should oblige us to love him, with all our Hearts, and with all our Souls, and with all our Strength, and with all our Minds; because he loved us, and laid down his Life a Ransom for us.

And here, I humbly conceive, it cannot be amiss, that I speak a little to some of the blessed Fruits of Christ's Death, because, this will give you a more clear and full View of the Greatness of this Love whereof I speak: And I shall confine myself to these four Particulars.

1. By the Death of Christ, the Persons of Believers are justified in the Sight of God, This I may say, is the first, and indeed the primary Fruit of his Death: *We are justified by his Blood*, says the Apostle, that is by faith receiving the perfect and unspotted Righteousness of Christ, and applying the Virtue of his Blood to our selves. And when we thus receive and apply Christ to our selves, we are accepted of as Righteous in the Sight of God: The Quarrel between God and us is taken up, the Enmity is slain, our Sins are pardoned, and we are absolved from the Penalty and Curse of the Law, which stood against us, and which otherwise had ruined us. We have no Righteousness of our own that can stand us in any Stead before God; but this is the Name whereby Christ is called, *The Lord our Righteousness*. And the Apostle Paul assures us, that Christ is made of God unto us, *Wisdom and Righteousness*, as well as *Sanctification and Redemption*. God is a consuming Fire to all the Children of Men that are out of Christ: Whereas, if we are cloathed with the *White Rayment*

of

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of Christ's Righteousness, it will cover all our Sins and Sores, all our Filthiness and Deformity; so that *the Shame of our Nakedness shall not appear.* And that which makes the Justification of our Persons a Blessing so much the more valuable, is, the Permanency of it: 'Tis a Thing that can never be lost. Rev. 3. 18.

The *Arminians* indeed maintain, that it is possible to fall from a State of Justification: To day justified, to Morrow unjustified; to Day a Member of Christ, and to Morrow a Limb of Satan: A most monstrous and uncomfortable Doctrine! But I'm sure, the Righteousness of Christ, which is put upon Believers in their Justification, can never be taken off; the Pardon which is sealed in the Court of Heaven, can never be reversed; the Cloud of Guilt once scattered, can never gather again; the Sins cast into the depth of the Sea, can never come up. Every thing in Justification concurs to make it sure and permanent. Free Grace, which is the first Mover of it, is a Fountain always flowing, a Sun that shall never know any going down: The Righteousness of Christ, which is the Matter of it, is a Robe that can never wear: The Gospel, which is the Charter of it, is a Grant that will never be out of Date: Faith, which is the Medium of it, will, under the Divine Influences, stirring up the other gracious Principles in the Soul, bud and blossom forth in fresh Acts; and when these Acts for a Time cease, it shall abide in the Root, kept alive by the eternal Spirit, breathing from the endless Life of Merit in Christ. All which make it appear,

B

that

that our Justification is built upon an everlasting Foundation, that can never be shaken.

2. Another of these excellent Fruits is, *Peace and Reconciliation with God*. This naturally follows upon the former: For doubtless all they that are justified in the Sight of God, are brought into a State of Favour and Reconciliation with him; according to that Observation of the Apostle: *Therefore being justified by Faith, we have Peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*. And again, *When we were Enemies, we were reconciled to God, by the Death of his Son*. Christ has done all that was requisite on his Part, to make up the Peace between God and Sinners; for he has slain the Enmity, and abolished Sin: He has satisfied Divine Justice to the full, and therefore immediately, upon our believing, we are brought into a State of Friendship and Nearness with God. Then will I sprinkle Water upon you, and ye shall be clean from all your Filthiness, and from all your Idolatries will I cleanse you. And the
- Rom. 5. 1, 10. Apostle assures us, *That there is now no Condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus*. O what a valuable Privilege is this, to be in a State of Peace and Friendship with God! For they that are brought into this blessed State, are allowed to come with Boldness unto the Throne of Grace, that they may obtain Mercy, and find Grace to help in Time of Need. How miserable is the Condition of those, who are yet in their natural and unconverted State? For all the Time they remain in that woful State, they are in a State of Enmity against God: They are Enemies to God, and God is an Enemy to them. God never looks upon a natural Man,
- Ezek. 16. 32.
- Rom. 8. 1.
- Heb. 4. 16.

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Man, but he is angry with him: For he is *angry with the Wicked every Day.* And how miserable they are who die in that woful Condition, who can declare? O how welcome then should the News be to us, that infinite Wildom hath found out a happy Expedient whereby God and Sinners may be reconciled, and made Friends again! For without this, we had been all undone. They that close with Christ, upon the gracious Terms of the Gospel, have their Sins bloted out; he washes them in his own Blood, from all their Iniquities, and will at long run present them without Spot or Blemish before his Father. The East and the West, those two distant and opposite Points of Heaven, will assoon meet together (which is simply impossible) as the Believer and his Sins shall meet together into Condemnation: For Christ their Surety, upon paying their Debt, hath procured their full Discharge; and therefore, *who shall lay any thing to the Charge of God's Elect.* Psal. 7.
11.

3. From these two, there results another great Blessing, namely, *Freedom and Deliverance from Wrath to come:* For *being justified by his Blood, we shall be saved from Wrath through him.* How dreadful is that Wrath which our Sins have exposed us to? The Law of God is written within and without, with most dreadful Curses, against the Workers of Iniquity: And until we be delivered from these, we are not capable of the least Degree of Felicity, even tho' we had all the Comforts that this World can afford. Our Happiness lies in the Enjoyment of the Divine Favour; and by Consequence Misery lies in the Want of it, especially

cially considering, that such as want the Favour of God, are obnoxious to all the bitter Fruits of his Wrath. The Apostle assures Eph. 2. 3. us, *we are all by Nature the Children of Wrath*; that is, liable to it, and justly deserving of it: But Christ hath given such compleat Satisfaction to the offended Justice of God, that God is now reconciled to Believers, and they for ever freed from Condemnation. He was made a Curse for us, that we might be redeemed from the Curse of the Law. Christ suffered himself to be thrown into the Sea of God's Wrath, that we might be freed from it. This was that bitter Cup which he drunk of, when he was in an Agony in the Garden, and prayed, that, if it were possible, it might pass from him. That Load of Divine Wrath which he then lay under, made him *sweat drops of Blood*: It made the Blood to boil in his Veins, and run out at all the Pores of his Body. This was such a heavy Load of Wrath, as the whole Creation had undoubtedly sunk under, had they born it but for one Hour.

Nay, our blessed Saviour hath not only redeemed his People from eternal Wrath, but likewise from all temporal Wrath, even from all Strokes of God's Anger upon Earth, that are purely judicial. He hath not indeed redeemed them from God's fatherly Chastisements; for surely that had been to their great Disadvantage: But only from his wrathful Rebukes. You have a remarkable Word to this Purpose, in the Writings of the Prophet

Isaiah. 60.
9.

Isaiah: In all their Afflictions he was afflicted. Or, as some read the Words, in all their Afflictions there was no Affliction. For Afflictions lose

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lose their Property, when they are laid upon the People of God: Because, with respect to them, they lost their Sting in the Sufferings of Christ, and consequently their Nature and Quality is changed. There is not so much as the least Grain of a legal Curse, in all the Afflictions that God's People at any Time undergo: They are saved from every Thing that would make them miserable, and they are exercised with Nothing but what shall do them good. Even those Calamities which are sent to chastise them for their Sins, are, through the Blessing of God, turned into Means that advance the Interest of their Souls; for all Things work together for good to them that love God, to them are they called according to his Purpose. Rom. 8. 28.

4. To compleat the Felicity of those for whom Christ died, he hath also by his Death purchased for them, Heaven and eternal Life, for, Rom. 5. 9. 10. says the Apostle, Much more being now justified by his Blood, we shall be saved from Wrath thro' him: For if when we were Enemies, we were reconciled to God, by the Death of his Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his Life. This is that Kingdom prepared for 'em, from the Foundation of the World: That is, from Eternity. The Apostle Peter hath a Word to this Purpose, which well deserves our serious Observation. For Christ also (says he) hath once suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. This bringing us unto God is not to be understood only of our having access to God in holy Duties, and enjoying Communion and Nearness with him in these; but likewise of our immediate and full Enjoy- 1 Pet. 3. 18.

Eph. 2.
12,---18.

Enjoyment of God to all Eternity. The Fall banished Man from the Presence of God, and unless a sufficient Attonement had been made, we had remained in an eternal State of Distance from him. But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were afar off, are made nigh by the Blood of Christ; for he is our Peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the Middle-Wall of Partition between us, having in his Flesh abolished the Enmity, even the Law of Commandments, contained in Ordinances, for to make in himself of twain one Body by the Cross, and came and preached Peace to them that were afar off, and to them that are nigh: For through him we have Access by one Spirit unto the Father. Every Believer owes his Nearness to God, and his Interest in his Favour, alennarly to the Death and Sacrifice of Christ: And if we are Believers, we shall not only be saved by him, but we may also joy in God, thro' our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the Attonement. We shall not only go to Heaven, but we shall go triumphantly: Not only get into the Harbour; but come in with full Sail. We joy in God, as not only saved from Wrath, but being our selves also in his Love; and all this through the blessed and holy Jesus, who is the Alpha and Omega, the Foundation and Top-stone of all our Comforts and Hopes; not only our Salvation, but our Song and Strength.

Rom. 5.
31.

V. The Efficacy and Sufficiency of our blessed Lord's Death doth greatly commend his Friendship and Love in dying for us: For his Death did give compleat Satisfaction to the Justice of God for the Sins of the whole elect

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elect World. It was a most perfect and compleat expiatory Sacrifice for the Sins of his People: For God could demand no more from Christ, as our Surety, and as coming in our Room and Place, than what he really did and suffered: He paid all that he was to pay, even to the utmost Farthing. So sufficient a Sacrifice was our Lord's Death for those great and noble Ends, that you'll hear the Apostle *Paul* bidding a Defiance to, and challenging the whole Creation, to charge God's Elect with any Thing, if they can, now that Christ hath suffered and died for them.

Who shall lay any Thing to the Charge of God's Elect? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the Right Hand of God, who also maketh Intercession for us.

Rom. 8.
33, 34.

VI. The *Acceptableness* of Christ's Death is another Argument of the Greatness of that Love whereof I speak. His Death was what the Father was well pleased with, and accepted of as a full and compleat Satisfaction to all the Demands of his Justice. It had been but small Comfort, and as little Advantage to us, that Christ died for us, and that his Intention in dying was, to procure us so many valuable Blessings and Privileges, as I spake of already; or yet that his Death is of such powerful Virtue and Efficacy, were not we in the mean Time likewise well assured, that his Death was every Way most acceptable to the Father; as a most compleat Satisfaction and Attonement for the Sins of his People: Hence in that Place but just now cited

Pfal. 68.
10.

cited, we are assured that Christ is risen from the dead, ascended up into Heaven, set down at the Right Hand of the Father; and making Intercession for us. That our Surety is let out of Prison, is a very plain Demonstration that our Debt is fully paid; For if any Part of it had remained yet unpaid, he had been still detained a Prisoner: But now he is *ascended up on high, having led Captivity captive, and received Gifts for Men, even for them that did rebel, that God the Lord might dwell in the Midst of them.* He is now set down on the Right Hand of the Majesty on high: There he ever liveth to make Intercession for his People, presenting all their Tears and Prayers, all their Vows and Alms, and other Services to the Father, and is preparing a Place for them, in those everlasting Mansions of Glory that are above, from whence he will one Day come, and receive them to himself, *that where he is, there they may be also.* And moreover, if Christ's Death had not been acceptable to the Father; surely we had not been commanded to remember his Death, until he come, as you know, we are expressly commanded to do, in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which was instituted for this very End principally, that it might be a constant and standing Memorial in the Church to the End of the World; a Memorial, I say, of the propitiatory Sacrifice of Christ's Death.

2 Cor. 11. *For as often as ye eat of this Bread and drink of this Cup, ye shew forth the Lord's Death till he come.* So that we are sure, his Death was a most acceptable Sacrifice to the Father, for our Sins.

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VII. The Seasonableness of Christ's dying for us, is another plain and convincing Proof of the Greatness of his Love: As the Seasonableness of any Mercy or Favour makes it the more great and valuable. When we were yet *lying and wallowing in our Blood, having no Eye* Ezek. 16.
to pity us, and no Hand to help us, then our 6, 7, 8, 9.
Time was a Time of Love; for then did he pass by us, and spread his Skirt over us, and said unto us, Live, yea, he said unto us, when we were yet in our Blood, Live. When we were not seeking after him, but flying from him, then did he in a Manner pursue after us, and catching hold of our Nature, laid down his precious Life for us. When the Sword of Divine Justice was already drawn against us, our Neck in a Manner on the Block, and the fatal Blow ready to be given us; then did he most seasonably step in for our Relief, kept the Stroke from us, and took it upon himself, coming most willingly in our Place, and suffering what we should have suffered. He who knew no Sin, who had no Sin of his own, even he was made Sin for us, that we might be made the Righteousness of God thro' him. He was apprehended as a Sinner, he was arraigned as a Sinner, he was accused as a Sinner, he was judged as a Sinner, he was condemned as a Sinner, he was executed as a Sinner; that we, who were the guilty Criminals, might be set free. *For Christ also hath once* 1 Pet. 3.
suffered, the just for the unjust. When we were 18.
yet without Strength, in due Time Christ died for Rom. 5.
the ungodly.

There was none in Heaven or Earth, that either would or could undertake for us, but he alone:

Philem.
18.

Heb. 2.
26.

Matth. 14.
31.

Rev. 1.
5. 6.

alone: And as Paul writes to Philemon concerning Onesimus, so did Christ say to the Father concerning the *Elect*: *If they owe thee any Thing, put it on mine Account, I will repay it;* and so he did to the last Mite. That's a memorable Word you have to this Purpose, which the Author to the *Hebrews* gives us: *For verily he took not on him the Nature of Angels, but the Seed of Abraham.* The Greek Word (*ἐκλήραυεν*) which we render *he took*, hath a particular Elegancy, which our Language can't fully reach. It properly signifies, to seize upon a Thing with great Vehemency; to lay hold on it, as it were with both Hands, as a Thing which we are glad to have got, and will be loth to let go again: It signifies, to catch hold of any one who is running away from us, or falling to the Ground, or into a Ditch. This Christ did for us: He took hold of us, and of our Nature, when we were flying from him; and when we were not only falling, but actually fallen already into the Pit. This is a Word that at once discovers Christ's singular Affection to us, and the extreme Danger we were in, which laid us under an inevitable Necessity of perishing eternally, unless he had both offered, and afforded us Relief. 'Tis the same Word which the Evangelist Matthew makes Use of, when he tells us, that Peter, beginning to sink, Christ *caught him by the Hand, and saved him.* And so I conclude with these Words of the beloved Disciple, *Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our Sins in his own Blood, and hath made us Kings and Priests unto God and his Father; to him be Glory and Dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

S E R.



SERMON II.

The Love of God in laying
down his Life for us.

I J O H. iii. 16.

*Hereby perceive we the Love of God, be-
cause he laid down his Life for us.*

THE Christian Revelation is the Re-
velation of the *Divine Love*; and the
Articles of our revealed Faith, are
but so many Articles relating to the
Love of God: The History of our Lord *Jesús*
Christ, is, indeed, the History of God's Love
to us, as his Transactions in and with his Son,
are but so many Testimonies of his Love to
us, and Means to advance us to the Love of
God. *God was in Christ, reconciling the World*
unto himself. What will not God do, when
he designs to demonstrate the Height of any
of his Perfections? When he would shew some-
what

2 Cor. 5.
19.

what of his Power and Wisdom, he made this World wherein we dwell: And when he would shew more of his Grandeur and Glory, he made Heaven for the ministering Spirits, that are before his Throne. What will he not do then, when he designs to demonstrate his Love, even his highest Love? What will not the *God of Love* do, when he designs, not only to manifest his Love, but to commend it; and to commend it, in the View of Heaven and Earth? Never was the Divine Love displayed so fully, and so wonderfully, as in that surprising Instance of it, mentioned in the Text. And truly they must needs be monstrously stupid and blind, that can't both perceive the Love of God, and be deeply affected with it, since *he laid down his Life for us*, in Testimony of his surpassing Love. This is the most miraculous, the most mysterious and flaming Instance of his Love, that ever the World did or shall hear of. You'll find how the Apostle *Paul* expresses himself upon this delightful Subject, *But God commended his Love towards us, in that while we were yet Sinners, Christ died for us*. Herein he has given us such an Instance of his Love, as not only puts it past all Dispute, but renders it the Object of the greatest Wonder and Admiration: He hath magnified his Love towards us, in the most affecting and endearing Manner imaginable. How glorious does this Love appear! and who can fully describe it! Or rather, who can fully comprehend it!

Having in the preceeding Sermon considered *Christ's Act of Dying*, I shall now proceed to consider the *Persons for whom he died*; that you may have a more clear and full View of this strange

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strange and wonderful Love. And here I shall shew you, that they were *most undeserving of any such Favour*; which does not a little heighten this transcendent and unparalleled Kindness, and render it truly marvellous in our Eyes.

For whom then was it that he died? Was it for the *fallen Angels*? No: These are left still to perish in their undone State. For whom then was it, I say, that he suffered and died? Hear how the Prophet *Isaiah* resolves this Question: *Surely he hath born our Grievs, and carried our Sorrows: Yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our Transgressions, he was bruised for our Iniquities: The Chastisement of our Peace was upon him, and by his Stripes we are healed. All we like Sheep have gone astray, and the Lord hath laid on him the Iniquity of us all.* But in what Condition were we? What was our State and Quality, when Christ commended his Love thus towards us? Were we innocent Creatures? Were we holy and righteous Persons? Were we in a State of Friendship with him? Or, were we able to do any Thing for our selves? No such Thing. On the contrary, we were *Sinners*, we were *ungodly Sinners*, we were *Rebels and Enemies to God*; and therefore in a very sad and deplorable Condition. Now, a Word to each of these.

I. I say, Christ died for us, when we were yet *Sinners*. Had we been without Sin, in an innocent and holy State, his Love had not been so very remarkable; or rather, there had been no Occasion for his dying, nor yet could we, even in that State, merit any Thing from him.

him. But this makes his Love truly wonderful, that he died for those, that deserved nothing but Wrath from him: For the Law, whereof we were Transgressors, bound us over to the Curse, even such a Curse as had certainly undone us for evermore, if he had not come to relieve us. Nay, as Matters then stood between Heaven and Mankind, there lay a whole Torrent of Curses, which we could not possibly wade through, nor could the whole Creation remove. The Law was indeed at first an easy Way to Righteousness, and consequently to Salvation, so long as we stood in our primitive Integrity: But, now, that we are fallen, and have lost our Power to obey, every Step of it sinks us as deep as Hell. The Law (as was observed before) is written within and without with Curses; so that, which Way soever a Man now stirs, he finds nothing but Death before him; and we all run as naturally to Hell, as the Rivers run into the Sea. 'Tis as impossible for a natural Man, of himself, to escape Damnation, as it is for us to maintain our natural Life without Food or Sleep: We can do nothing now of our selves, but ruine our selves more and more.

II. Christ died for us; when we were not only Sinners, but *ungodly Sinners*: For in due Time Christ died for the ungodly. That is, for those that were most unlike God, and who had no Goodness in them at all, to recommend them to God. Christ set not his Love upon us, because he saw something in us that was inviting or promising; but only because it seemed good unto him so to do. *We were conceived in sin, and shapen in iniquity. Our Under-*

Rom. 5. 8.

Psal. 51.
5.

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Understanding was darkened, through the Ignorance that was in us: Our Minds were alienated from the Life of God; and we were wholly polluted with Sin, which rendered us most vile and loathsome in the Sight of God. When we were in this deplorable State, Christ not only pitied us, but set his Love upon us; Nay, he not only set his Love upon us, but 'twas this Kindness and Love of God our Saviour, that sent Christ to redeem us, that sends his holy Spirit to sanctify us, that brings us out of a State of Nature into a State of Grace, and that will translate us from a State of Grace here, into a State of Glory hereafter. God looked upon the World of Mankind, as polluted and weltering in their Blood; full of Wounds, and Bruises, and putrifying Sores; full of Ugliness and Deformity; and even in that miserable Condition, his Thoughts were Thoughts of Love and of Good towards us. And that, when we were thus loathsome, he should have had any Thoughts of Good-will towards us, is, indeed, Love and Grace truly surprising. Had we been in a holy and innocent State, such as Adam was in, when he was first created, it had not been so much for God to have loved us, in these Circumstances; because we had then a very near Resemblance to himself, being made after his own Image: But to love us, when we were wholly corrupted and depraved, and in a Manner carried the Image of the Devil, this is really strange and wonderful.

III. He died for us, when we were yet Enemies to him: Not only Malefactors, but Traitors and Rebels, actually up in Arms against

gainst him, which are of all others, the worst Malefactors, and most obnoxious to Punishment. *Rom. 8. 7.* The carnal Mind (saith the Apostle) is Enmity against God: For it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be. 'Tis not only the Alienation of the Soul from God, but the Opposition of the Soul against him: It rebels against his Authority, thwarts his Designs, opposes his Interest, and spits on his very Face. An Enemy may be reconciled, but Enmity cannot. Now, that Christ should die for these, is such a Paradox, such a Mystery of Love, such an unprecedented Instance of Kindness, as, if rightly considered, must needs strike us with Astonishment. *John 15. 13.* Greater Love (saith our blessed Lord) hath no Man than this, that a Man lay down his Life for his Friends. 'Tis true, he died for us, to make us Friends: But we were Enemies when he died for us. The highest Proof of Love among Men is, for a Man to lay down his Life, to save his Friend's Life; and perhaps there are but few, very few such Instances of Love: For truly that Love is in the highest Degree, which is strong as Death. But Christ's Love to us far transcends even this: He has not only equalled, but even exceeded the most illustrious Example of Love amongst Men, in that he laid down his Life for his Enemies: *Rom. 5. 8.* For when we were yet Enemies, we were reconciled to God, by the Death of his Son.

And thus I have finished what I intended to say upon the first Head, and I hope, I've clearly demonstrated to you, that Christ's Love in dying for us, was truly great and surpris-

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surprising. The next Thing in the Method is, to give you an Account of some of the Properties or Qualities of this Love. And,

First, It was a most free Love, purely free and undeserved on our Part; for we deserved not the least common Mercy from him, and far less can we merit such an Expression of Love, as that whereof I speak; being, as was just now said, his rebellious Enemies. May we not then cry out with the *Psalmist*, *Psal. 144*: and say, *What is Man that thou art mindful* ^{3.} *of him, or the Son of Man, that thou should visit him*; especially after such a Manner as this? There was nothing in us, to draw out such Love and Affection toward us: On the contrary, we had every Thing in us, to provoke him to Anger against us. Our Hearts were full of deadly Hatred against him, and against his Laws and Government: We were not only *Sinners*, but *ungodly Sinners* (as I observed before) but he loved us, because he loved us. *He will have Mercy, on whom he will* ^{Rom. 9²} ^{15.} *have Mercy. He is the Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant* ^{Exod. 34.} *in Goodness and Truth.* He did not love us ^{6.} because we first loved him, but he loved us when we hated him.

Secondly, It was a matchless and unparalleled Love, such a Love as never was, and never can be equalled. There's no Love, in Nature like to this wonderful Love. Let us take a View of the Love that is to be found among the nearest Relations; and you shall see the most pregnant Instances of Love among Men fall infinitely short of this Love. Let us compare it with the Love of an indulgent Father

towards his Son, and you'll find it infinitely transcends even that. The most remarkable Instance of this Kind of Love, that I remember to have any where read of, is that of *David* towards his rebellious and graceless Son *Absalom*. When *David* first received the unwelcome News of *Absalom's* being slain in the Field of Battle, hear how passionately he laments it :
O Absalom, my Son, my Son, would to God I had died for thee ; Absalom, my Son, my Son. But even that comes infinitely short of *Christ's* Love to his Church : For *David* only wished to die a natural Death for his Son, and not a violent and cursed Death, as our Lord most willingly died for his People. And I can scarce think that *David*, in cold Blood, would have been content to die, so much as a natural Death, for such an unnatural and undutiful Son ; far less would he have been content to have made his Soul an Offering for his Sin, as our blessed Lord did for us. Again, let us compare this Love with that of a tender-hearted Mother towards her sucking Child ; and you'll see it as far surpasseth this, as it did the other. What a tender Love has the Mother to the Child she has brought forth, and to whom she has given Suck ? Can it be imagined that any Thing will make her forget such a Child :
Can a Woman forget her sucking Child, that she should not have Compassion on the Son of her Womb ? Yea, they may forget, yet will not I forget thee. Behold I have engraven thee upon the Palms of my Hands, &c. Such a Piece of horrible Unnaturality has been, and may yet be, for a Woman to forget, nay to murder, to dress, to eat her sucking Child ; as the *Prophet*

2 Sam.
18. 33.

Isaia. 49.
15, 16.

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phet in his Book of *Lamentations* tells us some *Lam. 2.*
 Women did in the Siege of *Jerusalem*. But *20.*
 God will not, cannot forget his People, hav-
 ing engraven them not only upon the Palms
 of his Hands, but even upon the Table of his
 Heart. Nothing can possibly make him for-
 get them; nay, Nothing can make him cease
 to love them. You have a flaming Instance
 of this, in the Institution of the Sacrament of
 the *Lord's Supper*: For you know, 'twas in-
 stitute in the same Night in which our Lord was *1 Cor. 11.*
 betrayed: When one would have Thought, it *23.*
 was high Time for him to mind himself, and
 to consult his own Safety, considering what
 he knew was coming upon him; yet he, in a
 Manner, forgets himself, that he might be
 mindful of us, and leave us this Token of his
 Love behind him.

Thirldy, It was a *distinguishing* Love; such
 a Love as he did not show to the a-
 postate Angels. The Angels are, in themselves,
 more glorious and excellent Creatures than *Psalm. 8. 5.*
 Man: For Man was made a little lower than
 the Angels. Yet *Christ* took not on him the Na-
 ture of Angels, but the seed of *Abraham*: Pas-
 sing by the apostate Angels, he fixed his
 Love upon rebellious Man, according to that
 of the Apostle *Jude*: And the Angels that *Jude 6,*
kept not their first Estate, but left their own Ha-
bitation, he hath reserved in everlasting Chains
under Darkness, unto the Judgment of the great
Day. The fallen Angels are in a most hope-
 less and desperate Condition, under an utter
 Impossibility of being saved; but there is *Hope*
in Israel concerning us; for we have the Offers
 of Mercy and Salvation, thro' the blessed and
 holy

holy Jesus, and if we perish, our Destruction will be entirely owing to our own wilful Obstinacy because *we will not come unto him, when we are invited, that we may have Life; whereas they that come unto him, he will in no wise cast out. And all that come unto him, labouring and heavy laden, shall find rest to their Souls.*

Fourthly, Christ's Love is a most constant Love:

- Joh. 6. 37. For *having loved his own, he loved them unto the End.* His Love is not like Men's Love; for how often do Men love to Day, and hate to Morrow! but where Christ once fixes his Love, there it abides, and nothing can remove it: For the Gifts and Callings of God are without Repentance. Tho' our blessed Lord endured much for the Sake of his People, while he was in the World; yet, all he suffered for them, did not in the least abate his Love, or cool his Affection towards them.
- Rom. 11. 29. *Many Waters could not quench this Love, nor could the Floods drown it. With everlasting Kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer: For the Mountains shall depart, and the Hills be removed; but my Kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the Covenant of my Peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee.* Mountains have sometimes been removed by Earthquakes, but the Promises of God were never broken, by any Event. The Day will come when all the Mountains in the World shall depart, and the Hills be removed, and the very Roots of them torn up; For the Earth also, and the Works that are therein shall be burnt up. But the Covenant of Peace between the Lord and his People, shall even then continue, in the everlasting Bliss
- Cant. 8. 7. *With everlasting Kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer: For the Mountains shall depart, and the Hills be removed; but my Kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the Covenant of my Peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee.*
- Isa. 54. 8. *Mountains have sometimes been removed by Earthquakes, but the Promises of God were never broken, by any Event. The Day will come when all the Mountains in the World shall depart, and the Hills be removed, and the very Roots of them torn up; For the Earth also, and the Works that are therein shall be burnt up. But the Covenant of Peace between the Lord and his People, shall even then continue, in the everlasting Bliss*
- 2 Pet. 3. 10. *Mountains have sometimes been removed by Earthquakes, but the Promises of God were never broken, by any Event. The Day will come when all the Mountains in the World shall depart, and the Hills be removed, and the very Roots of them torn up; For the Earth also, and the Works that are therein shall be burnt up. But the Covenant of Peace between the Lord and his People, shall even then continue, in the everlasting Bliss*

Bliss of all those, who are the Children of the Covenant.

Fifthly, It was an *early* Love; For it began from Eternity, and from Eternity did he design to give his People this Instance of his Love, I mean, *his laying down his Life for them*. Hence Christ is represented to John in one of his Visions, as a Lamb slain from the *Foundation of the World*. Rev. 18. 8. And Solomon tells us, that when God made the World, Christ, the eternal Wisdom of the Father was by him, *rejoicing in the habitable Parts of the Earth, and his Delights were with the Sons of Men*. Prov. 8. 31. The Son of God was ordained before the World, to the great Work of our Redemption: a Remnant of the Sons of Men were given him, and these were they in whom his Delights were. Tho' he foresaw all the Difficulties he was to meet with in this Work, the Services and Sufferings he was to go thro'; yet, because it would issue in the Glory of his Father, and the Salvation of those Sons of Men that were given him, he looked forward upon it with the greatest Satisfaction and Pleasure imaginable. So that in Truth, we have all the Encouragement we can desire, to come to him, and rely upon him, for all the Benefits design'd us, by this glorious Undertaking of his. And the Apostle Peter affirms, *that Christ was foreordained for this Work before the Foundation of the World*. 1 Pet. 1. 20. This Expression, *Who was verily foreordained*, imports, an Act of Will, a fixed Resolution, that the Thing shall be. God did determine and decree, that his Son should die for Man: And this Decree was before the Foundation of the World; that is, from Eternity.

You

You see then, what Kind of Love Christ's Love in dying for us, was. I am in the next Place, by Way of Application, to show you, what Influence the Consideration of this wonderful and ineffable, this matchless and inconceivable Love, should have upon us. And

I. Surely it should draw out the whole Strength and Stream of our Affections towards him, who loved us so much: *We should love him, because he first loved us.* Love is a Passion that must needs be raised to its highest Pitch, when we consider this *transcendent and surpassing Love.* If we consider Christ, as he is the Lord of Glory: He is without Spot or Blemish, all Beauty, all Glory, all Goodness, all Perfection in self: And therefore infinitely deserving of our Love, for what he is. But then, let us consider him as bleeding and dying for us; as one who is not only lovely in himself, even *altogether lovely*, and the *chief among ten thousand*, but exceeding kind and loving unto us: I say, let us consider this with Seriousness, and 'tis impossible but we must love him, and love him above all Things in Heaven and on Earth; love him, I say, *with all our Hearts, and with all our Souls, and with all our Strength, and with all our Minds.* For where, I pray you, shall we find such a Friend; such a fast and constant Friend, such a real and useful Friend? Where shall we find one that either did or can express so much real Kindness to us, as our dearest Lord hath done? For what hath he not done? And what hath he not suffered for us? *O the Heights and Depth, the Breadth and Length of this wonderful Love!* You know, when Christ wept

Wept at the Grave of *Lazarus*, they that stood by observed it, as an Instance of his more than ordinary Love to him: *Behold* Joh. 11. 35, 36. how he loved him. And now, if shedding a few Tears for his Death argued so much Love, what Love then must it be, to shed every Drop of his precious Blood? What Love must it be, to die, and to go down to the Grave for us? Surely this must have been wonderful and surpassing Love indeed. The Apostle recommends seriously to the *Ephesians*, that they study to know the Love of Christ, Eph. 3. 9. that passeth Knowledge. We must pray, and must endeavour to know Something of Christ's Love, and we should still covet and desire to know more and more of it, tho' after our best Endeavours, none can fully comprehend it. There is such an unfathomable Depth in it, that it passeth all Knowledge. The Riches of this wonderful Love are truly unsearchable. When holy *Bernard* considered this Love of Christ, in dying for us, he was in a Manner swallowed up in Wonder, and overwhelm'd as it were, with the Sense of its exceeding Greatness. Lord (says he) thou hast loved me more than thy self, for thou hast laid down thy Life for me.

If we are touched with a due Sense of this Love, we will be ready to say with the Apostle: *If any Man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.* 1 Cor. 16. 'Tis only the Want of a serious Reflection on Things, especially on this unparallelled Love of Christ to us, that, I may say, is the Cause of the Want of Love to Christ in some, and of the Weakness of Love in others; at least, I am sure, it is one great Cause

Psal. 31.
23.

Cause of both. For if Love is naturally productive of Love, what Effect shall the serious Consideration of such wonderful and incomparable Love have upon us? Surely the Love of Christ (it rightly considered) can't but constrain us to love him. All Men are bound to love him: But especially, *Love the Lord, all ye his Saints.* Ye that are Christ's Friends, that have any Acquaintance with him, or any Interest in him, surely ye are obliged in a particular Manner, and above all others, to have a strong and most affectionate Love to him. And especially, when ye are set down at the *Lord's Table*, to remember his Love in dying for you: How full should your Hearts then be of Love to him? If ever there be a Time, when ye are called to exercise a more than ordinary Degree of this holy Love, surely this is the Time, this is the Season, *when ye are shewing forth Christ's Death*, by partaking of the holy Sacrament of the *Lord's Supper*, where we have him, as it were, *evidently set forth crucified before our Eyes*: For in this Ordinance, the breaking of the Bread does in a most significant Manner represent to us, how his Body was broken and bruised for us.

II. It should oblige us to hate our Sins, to renounce and forsake them; vowing and resolving, that we will *have no more to do with Idols*. And the Reason of this is plain: For our Sins were truly the principal Cause of Christ's Death, and of all his other Sufferings: Isa. 53: 3. *For he was delivered for our Offences, he was wounded for our Transgressions, he was bruised for our Iniquities, &c.* When we call to Mind the Shame and Pain, the Misery and Torment, we by

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by our Sins brought upon the best Friend we ever had, or can have, how should our Indignation be raised against our Sins? If there be such a Thing as *Gall* in us, it must needs vent it self, and be ready to overflow; vent it self, I say, against our selves, and our Sins, when we remember these Things: For our Sins were indeed the Traitors, they were truly the Betrayers and the Murderers of the Son of God. 'Tis therefore most just that we should turn all our Hatred against them, and upon them we should principally discharge our Revenge: Shall we any more hug our Lusts? Shall we ever love and delight in them, when we consider they were the chief Cause of our blessed Lord's Death? I say therefore, let us revenge his Death upon them that really caused it; and let us kill them, as they killed him.

Let us henceforth *crucify the Flesh, with the Affections and Lusts thereof.* Gal. 5. 24.

Let us from henceforth set our selves in such a stated Opposition to our Sins, that the World may perceive our Love to Christ, by our constant and implacable Hatred of those Sins for which he died. And when when we are set down at the *Lord's Table*, let us there make a solemn Renunciation of all our Lusts and Idols, and both resolve and engage in the Strength of Grace, to have no more to do with them for ever. This is the proper Work and Exercise of a Communicant, when he is shewing forth the Lord's Death; neither indeed can we be worthy Communicants, unless we sincerely and firmly resolve and engage to do so.

To oblige us to this, let us here consider a little the curled Nature of Sin. How malig-

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Joh. i. 29.

nant and cursed must its Nature be, that nothing could expiate it, but the Blood of the Son of God? This only is that which can cleanse us from all Iniquity: Sin was such a *Goliath*, such a Giantly Monster, as made the whole Creation to tremble at its Challenge. None but Christ the true *David*, could match and master; none but he could combat and conquer it; and heal those dangerous, those deadly Wounds, that Sin had given us. Nay, what shall I say? even our *Lord* himself did not easily conquer Sin: He lost his Life, before he could complete the Victory: There was no *Balm* in the *Gilead* of this World, there was no *Physician* in the whole Creation, that could heal the Disease of Sin: The Blood of the immaculate *Lamb of God* was the only effectual Medicine, that was able to ~~to take away the Sin~~ *of the World*. Sin had made such a wide Breach between God and us, that none but he who is both God and Man could repair it: None but he durst, and none but he could undertake to become Sin for us, and to become Surety for our Debt. The Stain was so deep, that it was not possible to wash it away by any other Thing, than this *Blood of Sprinkling*. When it pleased the Father to bruise his own Son, and to lay upon him the Iniquity of the whole Elect World; here was such a prodigious Load of Sin and Wrath, as none could have born up under it, but he who is *God Omnipotent*. O what mad Creatures are we, that should love and cherish, that should live in and indulge our selves, in the Practice of that which made Christ to sweat *Drops of Blood*, and which will ruine us eternally, if we are the Fools to continue in it?

III. It

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III. It should certainly engage every one of us, to exercise our chief Care about our Souls. For should we not be most concerned about that which Christ died purposely to save. The Souls of Men do not perish at Death, as the Souls of the Beasts do; otherwise it can't be imagined, how our Lord would have laid down his Life for them. Without all Peradventure, there's a vast Difference between our Souls, and the Souls of Beasts: For when a Beast dies, its Soul dies also; but our Souls are immortal, and can never die. This Consideration should make every Man, above all Things, careful of his Soul; to have his Soul saved in the Day of the Lord. If indeed our Souls were to perish at the Day of our Death; then the Neglect of them, I confess, were no great Matter: But seeing our Souls must live for ever, either in Heaven, or in Hell; either in an Eternity of inconceivable Joy and Pleasure, or else of unspeakable Misery and Torment; certainly our principal Care should be to provide for our Souls in our Lifetime, that at the Day of our Death; when they shall depart out of our Bodies, they may enter into everlasting Happiness. For *what is a Man profited, if he shall gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul? Or what shall a Man give in Exchange for his Soul?* Alas! what Ground of bitter Lamentation have we, to consider how little Care or Concern many People have for their precious Souls? They live at such a Rate of Security and Sensuality, as if either their Eternity were to be expected here, or there were to be no Eternity hereafter! 'Tis truly Ten thousand Pities, that ever such a precious Jewel,

Matth.
16. 26.

Jewel, as an immortal Soul, should have been committed to the Care and Management of such Brutes, in humane Shape, who by minding Nothing but the Gratification of their sensual Appetites, degrade their Souls in this World, and destroy them in the World to come.

IV. The Consideration of this wonderful Love of Christ, should influence us who profess the holy Christian Religion, and call our selves his Disciples and Followers, to love one another. Is it possible for us to forbear loving those, for whom our Lord had such a strong and tender Affection, and for whom he endured such heavy Indignities, and exquisite Torments? Shall we not, in Obedience to his most urgent Command, and in Conformity to his noble Example, discharge the most sweet, the most easy and becoming Duty towards his Friends and Followers? Shall we not cheerfully bear with one another's Failings and Infirmities? Shall we not with Patience sustain some small inconsiderable Sights from others? Shall we not freely, and from the Heart forgive our Neighbour some petty Injuries, considering, that the Son of God did most willingly undergo the Pain and Ignominy of the Cross, and thereby obtain'd Pardon for our numberless and most heinous Offences against God? This is a Duty which both Christ and his Apostles have urged upon us, with the greatest Variety and Strength of Argument imaginable. Can we hear our blessed Lord, with a particular Earnestness and Concern, say, *This is my Commandment that ye love one another, as I have loved you?* Shall we hear the holy Apostle Paul, in the most moving Manner

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ner pressing us, *To walk in Love, even as Christ* Ephes. 5.
loved us, and gave himself for us? Can we hear 2.
the Apostle Peter calling loudly to us, and
charging us, saying, *See that ye love one another,* 1 Pet. 1.
with a pure Heart fervently? Can we hear the 22.
Apostle John, the beloved Disciple, arguing
after this Manner, *Beloved, if God so loved us,* 1 John 4.
we ought to love one another? I say, is it possible 11.
we can hear and consider all these Things, and
not be disposed to comply with them, for the
Sake of our crucified Saviour, whose Life and
Death, I may say, were one continued Re-
commendation of this noble Duty, and an
Encouragement to it? If we neglect this Duty
of brotherly Love; if we disregard this his par-
ticular Command, and refuse to copy after his
Example, what Ground have we to expect,
that he will own us for his Disciples?

V. It should excite our Thankfulness to our
holy and blessed Lord Jesus Christ, and raise it
to its highest Pitch, for all that he hath done,
and for all that he hath suffered and purchased
for us. You'll find the Apostle Peter beginning
his first Epistle, with a very high Strain of
Thankfulness for these Things. *Blessed be the* 1 Pet. 1.
God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which 3. 4.
according to his abundant Mercy, hath begotten us
again to a lively Hope, by the Resurrection of Je-
sus Christ from the Dead, to an Inheritance incor-
ruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, re-
served in Heaven for you, &c. As often as we call
to Mind the Love of Christ, in laying down
his Life for us, we should bespeak our Souls in
the Words of David: *Bless the Lord, O my Soul,* Psal. 103.
and all that is within me bless his holy Name: Bless 1. 5.
the Lord, O my Soul, and forget not all his Benefits,
who

who forgiveth all thine Iniquities, who healeth all thy Diseases; who redeemeth thy Life from Destruction, who crowneth thee with loving Kindness and tender Mercies, who satisfieth thy Mouth with good Things, &c. Now, the Way how we may best express our Gratitude to him, for such unspeakable Kindness, is, by answering all the Calls of the Gospel, and by yielding a constant, cheerful and ready Obedience to all the Precepts of the Gospel. Alas! many that profess the holy Christian Religion, have no more Sense of his Kindness, than if they were brute Beasts. This is but too plain and palpable from that Course of Life which they follow: For their Lives are a perfect Contradiction to his Laws; they have really as little Regard to what he has commanded, as if they were nothing at all obliged to him. If you please, let us suppose any Person for our sake, and that he might recover us from the greatest Dangers, and relieve us from the extremest Miseries, and that he might both purchase and secure to us the greatest Advantages; I say, suppose he should, for accomplishing these great Ends, willingly run the greatest Hazards, endure the most exquisite Torments, submit to the most disgraceful Ignominies, and even lose his Life in the most cruel Manner, after he had first cheerfully and freely divested himself of all his Estate, Honours, Ease, Pleasures, and the like; Would we not be very Monsters of Ingratitude, if we did not most deeply resent such extraordinary Kindness; and if we did not on all Occasions express our Thankfulness for it? But whatever our deepest Imagination can suppose of this Kind, falls infinitely short of what
our

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our dearest Lord hath done for us. For, I may say, he stoop'd from the Top of Heaven; he, in a Manner, laid aside the Felicity and Majesty of God, for the Sorrows and Infamies of a Cross, that he might redeem us from the Sorrows of Hell, and purchase for us the Joys of Heaven. So that we are most unworthy of this Kindness, if the Effects of it in our Hearts and Lives, be not in some Measure correspondent.

VI. It should oblige us cheerfully and resolutely to *take up our Cross, and follow Christ*. Let us then be content to suffer any Hardships, and endure any Sufferings, for his Sake and the Gospel's, that he in his holy and wise Providence shall, at any Time, think fit to call us to, who suffered so much for our sake. Let us think nothing too great to suffer for *Christ*, nor too valuable to part with for him, who thought nothing too much to do, nor any Thing too grievous to suffer, that he might accomplish the Work of our Redemption. Let us never disdain a State of Afflictions and Trials, nor be afraid of it, since he, by being a *Man of Sorrows and acquainted with Griefs*, and by enduring such Hatred and Contradiction of Sinners, has both sanctified and dignified a suffering Lot to his People: But let us rather, if it be the Will of God, be desirous, as the Apostle expresses it, *To fill up that which is behind of the Sufferings of Christ in our Flesh*. The same Apostle speaks it to the great Commendation of the believing Hebrews, that *they suffered joyfully the spoiling of their Goods, knowing in themselves, that they had in Heaven a better, and a more enduring Substance*: And you know who it was that said, *Blessed are ye, when Men shall revile*

Col. 1.24.
Heb. 10.
34.

Matth. 5. revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of Evil against you falsely for my Sake; rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your Reward in Heaven.

VII. It should powerfully influence us to devote our selves to the Service of God: To yield our selves unto him, as those that are alive from the Dead, and our Members as Instruments of Righteousness unto God. I beseech you therefore Brethren, by the Mercies of God, that ye present your selves, that is your whole Persons, a living Sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable Service. Here again is another very considerable Part of your Work at the Lord's Table, I mean, to make an entire and absolute Resignation of your selves to God; even a Resignation without Reserve, that you may be his in all that you are, in all that you have, in all that you can do, and in all that you can suffer: You must be divorced from Sin; from Satan, from the World, and from your selves; that you may be his, and only his, and wholly his, and his for evermore. And doubtless he has the best Right to us, and to our whole Service. We are his by Creation: For he made us, and not we our selves: We are his by Providence: For 'tis he that feeds us, clothes us; and 'tis in him we live, move, and have our Being. We are his by Right of Redemption, for he paid our Ransom from Hell and Wrath. We are his by solemn Covenant: For we were early dedicated to him in Baptism. And such of us as belong to the Election of Grace, are his also by eternal Donation from the Father. And therefore it is every Way most just and

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and reasonable, that we should be likewise his, by a solemn Dedication of our selves to him.

And if we do so, we shall never have Cause to repent of such a Deed: For, in this Case, his infinite Faithfulness shall make good all the Promises of his Word to us: For *they* ² *Cor. 13* *are all in Christ yea, and in him Amen, to the* ^{20.} *Glory of God.* His infinite Wisdom shall make every Thing, even the worst Things we can meet with in the World, work together for the Good of our Souls. His infinite Power shall support us under all our Trials, bear us thro' all our Difficulties and Discouragements, enable us to perform Duties, fortify us against Temptations, strengthen us against remaining Corruption, and perfect whatsoever concerns us, either as to our Souls or Bodies. His infinite Grace and Mercy shall pardon all our Iniquities, his infinite Justice shall defend our Innocence, and his infinite Goodness shall bestow upon us, every Thing necessary to make us happy in Time, and to Eternity. His Spirit shall be ours, *to lead us into all Truth, to seal us unto the Day of Redemption,* and to give us the Earnest of the promised Inheritance. His unsearchable Fullness shall be ours, to supply all our Wants, and to furnish us with all that's necessary for us, both as to Spirituall and Temporals. And in one Word, he will give us *Grace* here, and *Glory* hereafter; and no good Thing will be withhold from us, if we will devote our selves to him. But, on the other Hand, if we refuse to yield our selves to him, we shall have neither Part nor Lot in this Matter: We shall have neither Part nor Portion in the blessed

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Fruits

2 Thei. 1.
10, 11.

Pfal. 50.
22.

Fruits of his Death; but shall be inevitably exposed to all the bitter Fruits of his Wrath, both in this Life, and in that which is to come. *We shall be punished with everlasting Destruction, from the Presence of the Lord, and from the Glory of his Power, when he comes to be glorified in his Saints, and to be admired in all them that believe: And who, or what can screen us from his Wrath? He will tear you in Pieces, and none shall be able to deliver you out of his Hands? Consider this therefore, ye that forget God.*

VIII. The Consideration of this strange; this matchless Love, should certainly oblige us to accept of his gracious Offers, and be content to be saved in his Way only. To do this should also be your Exercise, when ye are set down at the *Table of the Lord*, to commemorate his dying Love. Here you are to give your hearty Consent to the gracious *Terms of the Gospel of the ever blessed God*: Here you must receive Christ for your Portion, and your Saviour; and in receiving him, you must not only consider him as a Redeemer, to save you, but likewise as a Lord to rule over you. And therefore remember, if any of you shall imagine Christ to be only a Priest to save you, to satisfy and interceed for you, and do not also at the same Time consider him as a King, to rule over you; or if you fancy, you can partake of the blessed Fruits of his Death, without taking up your Cross in Mortifications and Sufferings, and without following him daily in Holiness and Obedience; any Consent you give, is to an Imaginary Saviour, a Saviour of your own fram-

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framing and devising, and not of God's sending. You must therefore, I say, receive Christ wholly; as he is a teaching Prophet, as he is an attoning Priest, and as he is a King to rule over you.

As he is a *Prophet*, you must hear him, and hear him always: You must learn of him, submit to his Teachings, and never turn away your Ear from his Law: You must engage, that henceforth you will no more *consult with Flesh and Blood*, but take all your Instructions from him, how to behave your selves in every Relation, and in every Condition and Circumstance of Life; without swerving from the Rule of his Word, in any Matter, either of Faith or Practice. As he is a *Priest*, you must consider him to be the only Saviour of Sinners; resting upon him alone for Salvation; for Pardon, for Peace, for Reconciliation, for a Supply of all your Wants, and for every Thing that concerns you; from the Heart renouncing all your own Righteousness, and desiring *to be found in him, having that Righteousness which is by Faith*: Counting all Things but *Loss and Dung* for him, and being well content to part with all that's dear or valuable to you in the World, for his sake and the Gospels. As he is a *King*, you must cheerfully acknowledge his Dominion and Sovereignty over you, willingly subject your selves to all the Laws of his Kingdom, lay your selves out diligently in your several Stations and Capacities, for advancing his Interest and Glory in the World, and quietly and pleasantly submit to every Thing that he shall carve out to you, being fully content to be

managed in all your Concerns, as shall best please him, without murmuring or repining at any of his Administrations, how uneasy and afflicting soever they may be. He must have his Throne set up in your Hearts, and sway his Scepter over all the Powers and Faculties of your Souls; and under his Banner, you must fight the good Fight of Faith, against the Devil, the World and the Flesh, never entertaining the least Correspondence, whether secret or open, with any of his Enemies, I mean, your old Lusts. His Interest must be your Interest, his Friends must be your Friends, his Enemies your Enemies, his Will your Law: And in a Word, *whether ye live or die, ye must be the Lord's.*

IX. The Consideration of this wonderful and surpassing Love should likewise oblige every one that professes the Christian Religion, frequently to shew forth the Death of Christ, by a devout Participation of the holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, even as often as they have the Opportunity; because he was graciously pleased to institute this Ordinance for this very End and Purpose chiefly. We have a Generation of People among us, who have lived some forty, some fifty, or more Years, and yet have never once been at the Lord's Table, tho' there be as express and positive a Command for it, as for any one Duty of our holy Religion: *Do this in Remembrance of me,* says our Saviour. Without all Peradventure, it is a most hainious and provoking Sin, in the Sight of God, to live in the constant Neglect of so plain and necessary a Duty. For besides that Christ hath peremptorily com-

commanded it, there are these two Considerations, which make the Neglect of this Ordinance a Sin highly provoking.

1. It was institute by our *blessed Lord*, in that same Night in which he was betrayed; and therefore should be regarded by all that profess to be his Followers, as one of his last and dying Commands. Now, the dying Commands of a Friend, especially if he is a good Man, are justly had in great Reverence, by all sober People; and, in some Respect may be reckoned sacred, and therefore very binding. And how much more should the dying Commands of our blessed Lord and Redeemer be so? Should we not indeed reckon them sacred Things, that must by no Means be neglected? Nay, 'tis no small Contempt put upon him, when we have them not in high Esteem. So that, they who live in the Neglect of this Ordinance, really despise Christ, and trample upon his Authority; they refuse Subjection to him; and in a Manner despise his most precious Blood? How can they pretend any Love to Christ, that put such a manifest Contempt upon his dying Command? Or how can they expect any Interest in his Love, who are so void of real Affection to him?

2. The Sacrament of the Supper (as was observed before) was purposely appointed to be a solemn standing Memorial of our blessed Lord's Death: And therefore, to live in the habitual Neglect of this Ordinance, is in Effect, to disregard his Death, as if Men thought it a light and trival Thing not worth their While to commemorate; 'tis to *trample*
under

under Foot the Blood of the everlasting Covenant, and to disclaim their Part in all the blessed Fruits and Purchases of his Death.

Our Saviour has assured us, *unless we eat the* Joh. 6: 59. *Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his Blood, we have no Life in us.* That is, we have no spiritual Life in us, but are dead in Trespasse and in Sins, and therefore in a most dangerous and miserable Condition. Christ did most cheerfully lay down his Life for us: How then can any that call themselves Christians, have such a rooted Aversion to shew forth his Death, and commemorate that great Salvation he thereby purchased for his People? And thus you see that it is a most hainous Sin, to neglect this holy Ordinance.

Let Men fancy what they will, doubtless there is a Punishment annexed to the Neglect of this Duty, as well as to the ill Performance of it: There's a very great Danger in not coming to the Table of the Lord, as well as in coming to it unworthily: God is angry with the one, and thinks himself slighted by it, as well as by the other. And if he shall be condemned that communicates unworthily, that does it ignorantly, or with love to his Lusts; so shall he that stays away, and will not get Knowledge, nor be perswaded to leave his Sins. He that in this Ordinance is guilty of eating and drinking irreverently, profanes the Blood of Christ; and he that does not eat and drink at all, I mean, that altogether neglects this Ordinance, is guilty of despising Christ's Blood, and preferring his vile Lusts to Christ. And now, I pray you, which of these two is the greatest Sin? For
my

my Part I verily think, 'tis very difficult to determine which of them is the greatest: For the one seems to be every whit as great as the other. If Men will not partake of the Body and Blood of the Lord here, how can they expect to feast with him hereafter?

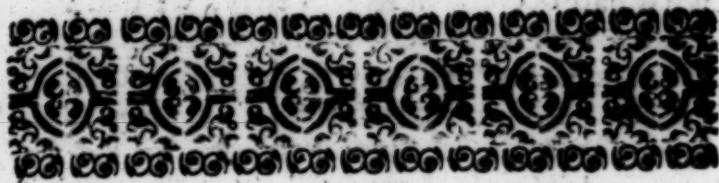
Many People bless themselves, and think they are safe, if they venture not upon these sacred Mysteries: But alas! it never in the least disquiets them, that they stay away, and continue in their Sins, and in their Enmity and Rebellion against God. These Men's Consciences are at best, but half informed; and I seriously wish them, not to continue in that Condition, wherein, by their Practice, they judge themselves unfit Society for Christ and Believers. Remember, I beseech you, that you not only live in Sin, but you add this to all your other Sins, that you refuse to remember Christ, and to *show forth his Death till he come*; tho' he has most peremptorily commanded you to do it. *He that breaks one of the least of Christ's Commandments, and liveth in the wilful and continual Neglect of it, shall be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven, and shall be deem'd not to belong to it, and shall therefore be shut out of it, and condemned to utter Darkness, where there is nothing but weeping, wailing and gnashing of Teeth.*

Away then with your supine Negligence; as ye love your Souls, and regard your own Comfort and Welfare. *Cleanse your Hands, ye Sinners; and purify your Hearts, ye Double-minded.* Resolve, for the future, to live more like the Christian Name and Profession; and come
to

to the Lord's Table, to strengthen these your Resolutions, and to confirm your selves in them: Come to renew your Vows of holy Living, and solemnly protest in the Sight of God, and before Angels and Men, that ye will be indeed the Followers of the blessed Lord Jesus Christ, all the Days of your Lives, and answer your Character as Christians. This is what you are all strictly bound to already, by Virtue of your Baptismal Vows, which it is not in your Power to shake off: These Vows bind you to all that we promise at the Lord's Table; and your neglecting to come there, is really a Breach of these solemn Vows, because they bind you to your whole Duty. So that your Condition is not in the least bettered, by your staying away from this Ordinance, but rather made much worse. What can you pretend as an Excuse for your Neglect? You can't plead Ignorance; for you see clearly this is your Duty: Neither can you alledge, that your Negligence proceeds from Want of Opportunity; for you have frequent Occasions of this Nature: And as little will it excuse you, that you are not fit, you are not prepared for such a solemn Ordinance; for who is to blame for that? Are any to blame for it, but your selves? You enjoy the Means, and you have Time to prepare your selves, but will not use these Means; at least you do not use them to Purpose, which is much the same. *Come then,* and let us join our selves to the Lord, by a perpetual Covenant, never to be forgotten. Consider what I say, and the Lord give you Understanding in all Things. *Unto him be Praise, Dominion and Glory for ever. Amen.*

Jer. 50. 5.

S E R



SERMON III.

The great Advantage of
drawing near to God.

PSAL. lxxiii. 28.

*But it is good for me to draw near to
God, &c.*

IT was the special Felicity of Man, that so long as he continued in a State of Innocence, he had the Favour of God, and lived near him: But he no sooner put forth his Hand, to take and eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, which alone of all the Variety in *Paradise* was forbidden him, but he was instantly banished the gracious Presence of his Maker; and at the same Time made obnoxious to his Wrath. And had not the infinite Wisdom and Goodness of God devised Means, that his Banished might not be expell'd from him, but might re-
gain

gain his Favour, where had we been? Or what had become of us? Verily, we had been all for ever excluded from his gracious Presence, and consequently from Hopes of Happiness, both present and future. God alone is the Fountain of Happiness, and in his Favour is Life: And therefore how strange is it, that any of us should be so brutishly stupid, as to continue in a State of Distance from him? especially considering that we are not only allowed, but called and invited; nay, and even encouraged to draw near to him:

Jam. 4. 8. *Draw nigh unto God* (says the Apostle James) *and he will draw nigh unto you.* So that, if we perish, the Blame must for ever ly at our own Door. And truly, if we are the Fools to refuse his Kind and gracious Offers, we bind our selves over to inevitable Ruin; we thereby render our Salvation impossible, and our Destruction inexcusable. Hence the Psalmist observes, in the Verse immediately preceeding my Text, *That they who are far from God shall perish, and he will destroy them that go a Whoring from him; and from thence justly inferring, It is good for me to draw near to God.*

Psal. 73.
27.

I shall not take up your Time, in giving an Account of the Penman of this excellent Psalm, nor of the Time when, or the particular Occasion upon which it was written; nor yet of its Scope and Parts: But come immediately to the Words read, which, you see, are the holy Psalmist's Commendation of Fellowship and Communion with God. *But it is good for me to draw near to God.* Where you may observe these two Things. (1.) The Way how this holy Man expresseth himself, when he speaks

speaks of Communion with God : He calls it a *drawing near to God* ; because we can have no Fellowship with God, so long as we keep at a Distance from him. (1.) Here is the certain Comfort and Advantage of Communion with God : *It is good for me.* It is every Way necessary for me to *draw near to God* : It is my Interest and Happiness that I do so; and I have had so much real Satisfaction already in drawing near to him, that I will joyfully embrace every Opportunity of maintaining and increasing my Acquaintance with him.

I intend from these Words to discourse to you concerning *drawing near to God*. The Method wherein I shall, by the Help of God, treat of this Subject, shall be,

I. *To enquire what this Phrase of drawing near to God supposeth.*

II. *What it more formally and directly implies.*

III. *How, or after what Manner we should draw near to God.*

IV. *I shall show you, that it is certainly very good for us to draw near to him.*

V. *Apply.*

To draw near to God supposeth these four Things. 1st, That we are naturally in a State of Distance from him. In this State we all come into the World, and in this State we remain, until such Time as we are converted and born again : And whenever we are converted, we are brought near God. You may see what the Apostle says to the believing *Ephesians* upon this Head, when he puts them in Mind of the vast Difference there was between their present and their former Condition; and shows them how far their Condition was now changed

Ephes. 2.
12, 13.

changed by Grace to the better, that they might be suitably affected with the Goodness of God to their Souls, and stirred up to Thankfulness; *That at that Time*, says he, *ye were without Christ, being Aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel, and Strangers to the Covenants of Promise, having no Hope, and without God in the World: But now in Christ Jesus, ye who were sometimes as far off, are made nigh by the Blood of Christ.* It were good for gracious Souls often to remember what they have been, and compare it with what they are now, in Order to their Humiliation; and to excite their Gratitude to him, who has so much signalized his Love and Grace to them. I say, we are all born in a State of Distance and Estrangement from God; We went astray from him so soon as we were born; and as long as we continue in a State of Nature, we are daily departing further from him: While we are in a State of Nature, we are like the *Prodigal*, as he is represented in the Parable, in a far Country, far from God, and therefore far from all Happiness.

2 Cor. 5.
19.

2dly, It supposeth, that there is a Possibility of getting near God: For certainly we had never been required to do, or to seek after that which can by no Means be attain'd. God has in his Word declared himself to be reconcilable to Sinners, in and through the holy and blessed Jesus. *God was in Christ*, says the Apostle, *reconciling the World unto himself, not imputing to them their Trespases.* Nay, he has invited and encouraged us to come unto him, and has promised us all hearty welcome, even a most kind and gracious Reception.

Come

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you Rest. And in that fore-cited Place, we are commanded to *draw nigh unto God*; and for our Encouragement, we are assured, *he will draw nigh unto us.* Indeed, if he had not been pleased to make such a gracious Declaration of his Mind, it had been the highest Presumption imaginable, for any of the Race of *Adam*, to have attempted any such Thing, as drawing near to God, or so much as to have had the least Thoughts of it. But now, that he has been graciously pleased to make such an Intimation, 'tis plain the Thing is not only possible, but probable: Nay, there's more than a bare Probability of our getting near God, there is an undoubted Certainty of it, if we will but diligently use these Means which he has prescribed, to qualify us for so high and valuable a Privilege. 'Tis then our Blame, if we live without God in the World.

3dly, It supposeth, that a State of Distance from God, is a State of very great Misery and Danger: For were we either at no Loss at all, or but at a small Loss, by being far from God, there were no great Occasion for our drawing near to him; and to what Purpose should we do it? But God alone is the Spring of Happiness, *for with him is the Fountain of Life*: And therefore if we are far from him, we can't but be most miserable, even tho' we had all the Comforts and Advantages that this World can afford. O what a miserable and comfortless Life do they live, who *live without God in the World*, tho' they live in the greatest outward Abundance? And what a poor and pitiful

pitiful Choice do they make for themselves, who take up with the World, or any earthly Thing? *For so, they that are far from thee shall perish.* The Meaning is, they that are in a State of Distance from God, that in their Hearts desire the Almighty to depart from them, they shall undoubtedly perish, for *the Mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.* They chuse to be far from God, and they shall be condemned to live in an infinite Distance from him, and that to all Eternity: For they *shall be punished with everlasting Destruction from the Presence of the Lord, and from the Glory of his Power, when he comes to be glorified in his Saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.* Consider this therefore, *ye that forget God, lest he tear you in Pieces:* And who is he that will deliver you out of his Hands?

2 Thef.
3. 9.

4thly, This Phrase, *to draw near to God*, supposeth likewise, that it will be much every Way to our Comfort and Advantage, that we draw near to him: For if we cannot be happy without God, it must needs follow, that we shall be compleatly happy in him. As all that is in the World cannot make us happy, if we are far from God; so, if we are near him, we are most happy, tho' our outward Condition in the World be never so poor and despicable. *But it is good for me to draw near to God.* 'Tis not only good, but very good: 'Tis the chief Good, and it is the only Good: It is that Good for a Man in this Life, which above all others he should most carefully pursue, and make sure to himself. 'Tis the best of all Things for us; for it will not only bring us into a State of present Peace, Comfort and Happi-

ness; but it will secure our eternal Felicity. God is our best Friend at all Times, and he is our only Friend at some Times: And therefore it must needs be good, every Way good for us, to *draw near to him*; for is it not every Way for our Advantage, to live near our best Friend? This is surely *the one Thing needful*; the better Part, that shall not be taken from them that chuse it.

But I shall afterwards have Occasion to show you more fully, the singular Advantage of drawing near to God, when I come to the fourth Branch in the Method of my Discourse; and therefore shall say nothing further upon it now. And thus you see what this Phrase of *drawing near to God* supposeth. Let us next consider, what it more directly and formally implies. And I humbly conceive, it implies these three Things chiefly.

First, It implies, the going out of the Soul after God, in earnest Desires: For it must not, it cannot be understood of any local or bodily Motion, but only of the Motion of the Soul. To *draw near to God* then is, to have the whole Powers and Faculties of the Soul tending towards God, and terminating upon him: 'Tis to have the Mind exercised in the Contemplation of God, the Will in chusing and embracing him, the Desires in following hard after him, and the Affections in being knit to him. You see how elegantly *David* expresseth the Strength of his Desires after God. *As the Hart panteth after the Water Brooks, so panteth my Soul after thee, O God.* *My Soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: When shall I appear before God?* And in another

Psal. 42
1, 2.

Place,

Pfal. 63.
1.

Place, he speaks to the same Purpose: *My Soul thirsteth for thee, my Flesh longeth for thee, in a dry and parched Land, where no Water is.* You see, this holy Man *thirsted for God*, his Soul thirsted for God: Not for the Ordinances, so much as for the God of Ordinances: For a gracious Soul can take little Satisfaction in God's Courts, if he does not meet with God himself, and enjoy him there. Nothing but God was in *David's Mouth*, and nothing but God was in his Heart, and in his Desires. He had a Kingdom, he had a Throne, he had a Crown, and he had Honours and Riches, as much as one could desire: And why could not these satisfy his Thirst? Could he not sit down upon these Enjoyments, and rest content with them? No: He was still hungry and thirsty, still pining and languishing, still empty and dying, till he had more of God, and some new Manifestations of his Love and Kindness.

Pfal. 63.
8.
Pfal. 84.
2.

And in another Passage in the Book of Psalms, you'll find how much he breaths out a Spirit of Impatience, till he might have some new and larger Discoveries of the Divine Favour, which was the very Life of his Soul. *My Soul followeth hard after thee.* And again, *my Flesh and my Heart crieth out for the living God.* In these high Strains of the purest Divine Rhetorick, was his Soul carried out after God: God was the one Thing, and the only Thing that his Soul desired. Without God, all was nothing to him, and in God he had all. The gracious Presence of God was enough to him: And without this, all Companies and Societies, all Multitudes and
Throng

SERM. III. *drawing near to God.*

67

Throngs of Men; yea, all Companies and Societies of Saints or good Men, were but Solitariness and Widow-hood to him. You'll likewise find how much the Desires of the *Sponse's Soul* were carried out after *Christ*. Cant. 32
She went from one Duty to another, and from one Ordinance to another, and with an unwearied Diligence and Application, she *sought him whom her Soul loved*. And altho' she met with many Repulses and Disappointments, yee these did not in the least discourage her; they did not make her desist from her Pursuit of him, nor so much as in the least blunt the Edge of her Desires, but contrariwise, they heightened her Desires, and made them the more keen. And when after much Diligence, many longing Desires, and many melancholy Disappointments, she had at length found him, she resolves never to part with more: *I held him, and would not let him go.*

2dly. It implies the Soul's cleaving fast to God, by a strong and active Love. For sure I am, we cannot once get near God, and far less can we keep near him, and live near him, until first we love him, with all our Hearts and Souls, with all our Minds and Strength. That which causeth the Distance, which is naturally between God and us, is the Enmity we have in our Minds against him; and until this woful Enmity be rooted out of our Hearts, and the Love of God shed abroad in us, by the Holy Ghost, the Distance between God and us can never be removed. In order therefore to our drawing near to God, it is necessary we love him above all, and esteem him above all: We must be well pleased that there is such a Be-

E

ing;

ing; and we must be well pleased with all his Attributes, and with all his Relations. So that to love God, is to think of him with Pleasure, to speak of him with Pleasure, to hear of him with Pleasure, to speak to him with Pleasure, and to serve and obey him in every Thing with Pleasure: We must love him so as to love Nothing besides him, but what we love for him, and in Subordination to him. Who was it that said in the Text, *But it is good for me to draw near to God?* Was it not the same

Psal. 73.
25.

who said, in one of the preceeding Verses, *Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I desire besides thee?*

And thus to draw near to God, and to cleave fast to him in our Affections, as it cannot but yield a constant and solid Pleasure to our Minds, so it must needs be every Way profitable to us. 'Tis by our Love, as well as by our Desires, that we are at first brought near God; and 'tis by the same Love, as well as by our Faith, that we are tied close and fast to God, and kept near him. Nay, so firmly does this Love unite us to God, that whithersoever he goes, there will we go, tho' it were to the most distant and desolate Corner in all the Earth: Where he lodgeth there will we lodge; tho' it were in a dark Prison, or a noisome Dungeon, tho' it were in a Lodging no better than *Jacob* had, when he lay in the open Air, and had a Stone for his Pillow. This Love will make us cleave more close to God, than *Ruth* did to *Naomi*, she indeed resolved, that Nothing but Death should part them: But if we have this Love to God, we will resolve that Death

Ruth 1.
17.

SERM. III. *drawing near to God.*

67

it self shall not separate us from him, nor shall the Fear of Death make us neglect our Duty to him. And they that thus love the Lord their God, may rest assured, that Nothing shall ever be able to separate them from the Love of God which is in Christ Jesus; but they shall live a Life of blessed Nearness with him now, and in the World to come, they shall be for ever with the Lord, in a State of immediate and uninterrupted Communion with him, where they shall be infinitely more happy, than Tongue can express, or Heart conceive.

3dly, To draw near to God implies, the Soul's taking up with God as its Portion, and delighting and acquiescing in him as a sufficient Portion, whenever we can say, *The Lord is the Portion of mine Inheritance, and of my Cup,* we will at the same Instant think, *the Lines are fallen to us in a pleasant Place, and we have a goodly Heritage.* What can we have more? Or what can we desire better than God? If we have him for our Portion, well may we say with the Psalmist, *Return unto thy Rest, O my Soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.* Rest in him, and seek no further. If our Souls have said unto the Lord, *thou art my Lord;* if he be the Portion which we have chosen, we need not envy worldly People their carnal Mirth, or their sensual Pleasures and Delights, but count our selves truly happy in what we have already, doubting Nothing, but we shall be eternally and compleatly happy, in what we yet hope for. *David* observes the extreme great Folly of wicked and earthly Men, in placing all their Delight in their Creature Enjoyments.

Pfal. 4. 6. ments: There be many that say, Who will shew us any Good? Give us Abundance of the Riches, Honours and Pleasures of this World, and we will seek no more; here do all our Desires terminate, and here they shall terminate. But, says the gracious Soul, Lord, lift thou up the Light of thy Countenance upon me. Give us thy Favour and Peace, give us Nearness with thy self; and as to all that concerns us in the World, we can refer our selves entirely to the Disposal of thy holy and wise Providence, who knows best what is good for us.

*Hab. 3.
17, 18.*

I say then, the Soul that draws near to God, resolves to take up with him, and rest satisfied in him, as a compleat Portion. He can rest in the Enjoyment of God, tho' he be quite destitute of earthly Comforts: He can sing with the Prophet Habakkuk, and say, Tho' the Fig-tree should not blossom, and there shall be no Fruit in the Vine; the Labour of the Olive shall fail, and the Fields shall yield no Meat; the Flocks shall be cut off from the Folds, and there shall be no Herd in the Stall: Yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my Salvation. He can when emptied and impoverished, enjoy all in God; he can pleasantly and contentedly sit down upon a melancholy Heap of the Ruines and Rubbish of all sublunary Comforts, and rejoice in God, as the God of his Salvation, and as infinitely better to him, than all Creature Enjoyments whatsoever. The Satisfaction that results from worldly good Things, is but a mere Shadow, an empty Show that's really not worthy the naming, and can only gratify the sensual Appetites,

petites, but cannot yield any real Pleasure to the Soul. This Joy that gracious Souls find in God, *can no Man take from them.* I Appeal to the Experience of the Saints in all Ages, for the Truth of this: They that *have tasted that the Lord is gracious*, can bear Witness, that no created Comfort can bring such Delight to the Soul, as they find in conversing with God in holy Duties, nor are any Pleasures so suitable to the rational Soul, as those that are to be found in the Exercise of serious Religion. And therefore they that have had Experience of the Pleasures that are peculiar to Wisdom's Ways, cannot but take up with God, as the alone Portion of their Souls: They cannot but delight in drawing near to God, and in living near him.

And thus you see, what it is to draw near to God. The next Thing in the Method, is, to instance how, or after what Manner we are to draw near to him. And, in a Word, this must be done, with all the Dispositions of a good Christian. What these Dispositions are, deserves our particular Enquiry, because, without them, we can perform no acceptable Service, nor can we be brought near him. And what I intend to say upon this Head, shall be with a particular View to the holy Ordinance of the Lord's Supper, that you may thereby see, with what Disposition of Soul you should come to the Communion-Table, and how your Minds should be exercised during the whole Action. The Work of Communicating is a very important and serious Work: And therefore, to direct you in it, must needs

be very proper to the Occasion of the Day.
And,

First, We should always draw near to God; with *high and holy, with awful and reverent Thoughts of him*: For he is *the high and lofty One*, infinitely higher than the highest on Earth: He searcheth the Hearts, and trieth the Reins of the Children of Men, and has certified us, *He will be sanctified in all them that come nigh him*. He is the Great, the Almighty *Jehovah*, and can strike us dead on the Spot, if we rush inconsiderately into his holy Presence: He can *answer us by terrible Things in his Righteousness*, and *mingle our Blood with our Sacrifice*, if we do not draw near to him with Reverence, and behave our selves suitably, while we are before him. But when we draw near to God in this holy Ordinance of the *Supper*, we are then in a special Manner called to have reverend and awful Thoughts of him upon our Spirits, this being the most solemn Approach of any we make unto him. If we communicate irreverently, we communicate unworthily: And *whosoever shall eat of this Bread, and drink of this Cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord, and eat and drink Judgment to themselves*. And therefore, let me beseech you, when ye are set down at the Lord's Table, remember where you are, and what you are about to do: For certainly, he who is a holy and a jealous God, cannot but be exceedingly displeased, if we shall presume to draw near to him, without suitable Impressions of his infinite Purity and Majesty.

Lev. 10.
3.

1st Cor.
11. 27.

2dly, We must evermore draw near to him, with *humble and lowly Thoughts* of our selves: This naturally follows upon the former: For if we have high and reverent Thoughts of God, we cannot but at the same Time have low and mean Thoughts of our selves; and the more low we are in our own Eyes, God will so much the more regard us. I'm sure; if we rightly consider what sinful polluted Creatures we are, we must needs be most vile in our own Eyes: Especially, when we draw near to him, *Who is of purer Eyes than* Hab. 1: *to behold Iniquity.* They that know God, and 12. that know themselves, their Souls will be abased before him; and 'tis only Men's Ignorance of themselves, that makes them think highly of themselves. How hateful must that proud *Pharisee* have been in the Sight of a holy God, who came before God, with such high and towering Thoughts of himself, as made him boast so much of his Attainments, and despise others that were far better than himself? *God, I thank thee, I am not as other Men* Luke 18: *are, nor even as this Publican; I am no Extortion-* 11, 12. *er, no Adulterer, no unjust Person; I fast twice in the Week, and I give Tithes of all that I possess.* In all our Approaches unto God, let us imitate the poor *Publican*, whom this vile Hypocrite so far undervalued: *He would not so much as lift up his Eyes to Heaven, but stood afar off, and smote upon his Breast, saying, God be merciful to me a Sinner.* With such a Disposition as this should we always come to the *Lord's Table*.

I assure you, the more unworthy we are in our own Apprehensions, the more wel-

come will we be to the great Master of this Feast. Let us then come with such a Disposition as *David* had, when he sate before the Lord, and said, *What am I, or my Father's House, that thou hast brought me hither-to?* Or like *Mephibosheth*, when *David* told him, he was to eat Bread continually at his Table; *What is thy Servant* (says he) *that thou shouldest look upon such a dead Dog as I am?* We should here consider, that we deserve not, with the Dogs, to eat of the Crumbs that fall from the Children's Table; and yet we are set down at the Table among the Children. We deserve not so much as the least Crumb of the Bread of Life, nor so much as one Drop of the Water of Life; and yet we are invited to eat and to drink abundantly: We deserve that a Cup of Wrath, and Trembling should have been put into our Hands; and behold! here is a Cup of Consolation, and a Cup of Salvation offered to us. This is the Lord's doing, and it should be marvellous in our Eyes. And is this the Manner of God with Men? O marvellous Love! O astonishing Kindness! O surprising Grace! O unparalleled Condescension! O Goodness truly divine! Let us then sit down at the holy Communion Table, admiring the great Goodness of God to us, that we are not quite banished from his Presence; but that he yet fills our Mouths with good Things.

3dly, In every Duty we should draw near to God, with the greatest Composure of Thought, and Presence of Mind, that we can attain to: For we must, evermore, serve the Lord without Distraction, otherwise, we at once

once deprive our selves of the Sweetness and Benefit of Duties, and render our Service highly displeasing to God. The Heart is the principal Thing he looks to, and 'tis what he chiefly requires of us: *My Son give me thy Heart.* And how can we be hearty in his Service, if our Minds are roving and unfixt, wandering after every Impertinency. As the Fowls that came down upon *Abraham's* Sacrifices, had not he driven them away, would certainly have pickt and torn, and spoiled these Sacrifices: So will distracting and wandering Thoughts spoil the best of our Duties, if we are not careful to drive them away, and compose our Hearts into a serious Frame before God. Our Thoughts are apt to wander after a thousand Vanities; and 'tis no doubt very difficult to keep them in, and to keep them employed as they should be. The best of People have vain Thoughts lodged within them, and they will be in us, so long as we are in this State of Imperfection. These are the greatest Hinderance to true Devotion, the greatest Obstacle to Seriousness, and if we do not take Care to restrain them, we can have no Nearness with God. 'Tis the *Preacher's* Advice to us, and a most necessary Advice it is, which we must carefully follow; *That we keep our Feet, when we go in to the House of God.* The Meaning is, when we go about any Part of religious Worship, we should compose our selves for it: We must not suffer our Minds to run out after wrong Objects, but keep them fixt upon God: For in the Business of God's House, there is Work enough for the whole Man, and all

all little enough to be employed in his Service.

Let me beseech you therefore, before you approach to the Lord's Table, to put away all vain Thoughts, so far as you can: Clear the Court of these idle Vagrants, when the Doors of your Souls are to be opened to the King of Glory. And when ye are set down at the Lord's Table, see that from the Beginning to the End of the Action, ye keep your Hearts and Thoughts fix'd upon the holy Mysteries in Hand: Let not your Minds wander, but settle them upon the heavenly Objects before you. For, to be sure, there's enough in *Christ crucified*, to employ your Meditations all that Time; nay, all the Time of your Lives: Nay, in *Christ crucified*, there is enough to employ our Thoughts to Eternity. Neither can your Thoughts be better employed at any Time, nor more for your Pleasure and Profit: But during the Time of Communicating, 'tis doubtless the most proper Subject for your Meditations. Let not your Eyes wander: For if the Eyes wander, truly the Heart is not likely to stay long behind. When we are *showing forth the Lord's Death*, that is certainly a Time when we should summon the Attendance of all our Thoughts, and keep them close to the Business in Hand. Our Thoughts should be as composed when we communicate, as we would desire them to be at the Hour of Death.

Rom. 14.
23.

4thly, We must draw near to God, in the lively Exercise of Faith: For whatsoever is not of Faith, the Scripture assureth us, is Sin. And seeing we have such an high Priest over the House

House of God, as Jesus Christ, we ought to draw Heb. 10.
near with pure Hearts, in the full Assurance of 22. 22.

Faith. But in the Sacrament of the Supper, Faith is in a special Manner necessary and useful: For without Faith we can neither discern the Lord's Body, nor receive him, nor feed upon him. Here we should exercise a very strong and active Faith in our blessed Lord Jesus Christ; with our whole Hearts relying upon him, for every Thing necessary for us, both in Time and Eternity. Could we but here turn our Eyes inward (as every Christian should do) and behold the true State of our Souls, and discover all our spiritual Plagues and Wants, so as to be rightly affected with them; in this Case, we would quickly see the great Need we have of Christ: And this again would quickly draw the Eye of our Faith towards him, as one who can supply all our Wants; and heal all these deadly Wounds that Sin has given us; as one who can redeem our Souls from Destruction, and make us every Way complete. Here we may, by Faith, behold him opening his blessed Wounds to cure us: Here we may behold him ready to wash us in his own Blood from all our Sins. Even in bodily Diseases, when we put an entire Confidence in the Skill and Faithfulness of our Physician, this makes the Cure more easy and probable: And well may we put an entire Confidence in the Skill and Faithfulness of Christ, our Soul-Physician: For if we but look unto him, we shall be infallibly cured, whatsoever our spiritual Maladies are. *Look unto me, all ye Ends of the Earth, and be ye saved:* Isa. 45.
For I am God, and there is none else, &c. He hath

- hath a most wonderful and surprising Method of curing diseased Souls; quite different from what earthly Physicians use in curing Men's Bodies: For it is *by his Stripes that we are healed*. And then, as to the Supply of all our Wants, we may securely rely upon him for this also: For *in him dwelleth all the Fulness of the God-head bodily; and we are complete in him, who is the Head of all Principality and Power*. So that if we in this Ordinance, exercise this Faith aright, we shall have Pardon, Peace, Justification, Reconciliation, Sanctification, with every other Thing we need; and great Abundance of them: For (says the Prophet) *he'll abundantly pardon*. Or, as you have it in the Margin, *He will multiply to Pardon*. And without all peradventure, as the Apostle reasons upon this Head; *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all; how shall he not with him freely give us all Things?*
- Isaiah 53. 5.
Col. 2. 9, 10.
Isaiah 55. 7.
Rom. 8. 32.

5thly, We must draw near to God, *penitently*; I mean, in the Exercise of godly Sorrow and Repentance for all our Sins; and this is in a particular Manner to be done, when we draw near to him in the holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The Nature of this Ordinance and its End, is sufficient to convince every Man of this: For 'twas instituted, to shew forth the Lord's Death till he come. When we call to Mind what he suffered for us (which is most elegantly represented to us here, by that significant Action of *Breaking the Bread*) how should we mourn, and be in Bitterness of Soul for our Sins, which were the Occasion of so much Pain and Trouble to him? What Agonies and Torments was he wrack'd with? How

SERM. III. *drawing near to God.*

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How deep were his Wounds? How full of Trembling was his Cup? How weighty was his Burden, when he lay under the innumerable Mountains of our Guilt? Who can compute how many full Vials of pure unmixed Wrath he did drink off, with all their bitter Drègs? Hence the *Greek Church* were wont to beg of God, that for the *unknown Sufferings of Christ*, he might have Mercy upon them. Never was any Sorrow like unto his Sorrow, when it pleased the Father to bruise him, and to lay upon him the Iniquities of the whole *Elect World*. He was made to tread the *Wine-press of his Father's Wrath alone*, and there was none to take Part with him. Now, I say, when we in this Ordinance call these Things to Mind, and remember that we by our Sins were indeed the Cause of all that he endured, either from the Hand of God, or from the Hand of Men; Can we be unconcerned? Or can we have whole Hearts? Is it possible we can look upon him whom by our Sins we have many Times pierced, and not mourn? Oh! the Stupidity, the brutish Stupidity of the Generality of Mankind, that can hear of the great Sufferings of Christ, and be as unconcerned, as if they were so many Stocks and Stones? The Deportment even of the inanimate Creatures at the Death of Christ, will teach us how these Things should affect us: For the whole Creation seems to have been moved, and the whole Frame of Nature appears to have been disturbed at this mournful and tragical Spectacle, as if they had had a Kind of Sympathy with him that suffered and died. The Sun in the Firmament, either out of Sor-
row

row or Shame, hid its Face, put on its mourning Attire, leaving the World covered with gloomy Darknes, for the Space of three Hours together: The very Bowels of the Earth did open and yearn; the Rocks were broken asunder, the Vail of the Temple was rent in twain, from Top to Bottom, the Graves were opened, and the Bodies of some of the departed Saints did rise. And now, shall we that were more concerned in what was then acted; I say, shall we be more stupid than the Earth? Shall we be more obdurate than Rocks? Shall we be more senseless and drowsie than dead Carcases, the most insensible and unmoveable Things in Nature? And yet we are truly so, if we are not deeply affected with the Thoughts of Christ's Death; especially, when we behold him, as it were, *evidently set forth crucified before our Eyes*, as he is represented to be in this Sacrament.

6thly, Let us draw near to God, with our Hearts full of Love to him: For he is in many Respects gracious and loving to us. Especially must we do this, in the holy Sacrament of the Supper; where we are to commemorate the greatest Instance of Love, that ever the World did, or shall hear of; even God's giving his own Son, his only begotten Son, the Son of his Love for us, and even giving him up to the Death, the cursed and ignominious Death of the Cross for our Sins, that he might pay our Ransom from Hell and Wrath, and purchase eternal Redemption for us. Since God has so loved us, how much are we bound to love him. What hath not our blessed Lord done? And what hath he not suffered to gain our Affec-

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Affections, and to oblige us to love him? Shall not then the Consideration of this wonderful and matchless Love raise our Affections towards him, and fix them upon him? How monstrously ungrateful are they, that still retain their natural Enmity against him? His Love; especially such wonderful and expressive Love, should surely constrain us to love him! Nay, it should oblige us so to love him, as to love nothing comparatively to him; saying with the Psalmist, *Whom have I in Heaven but thee? And upon the Earth there is none that I desire besides thee.* Let us therefore remember his Love more than Wine. And that our Hearts may be warmed with Love to him, let us, in this Ordinance, take a serious View of him on the Cross. Behold how his Heart beats, his Head hangs down, and his Hands and Feet are pierced with Nails; and all for us! Behold how his Body is racked, his Soul scorched, and his whole Person tormented in the Flames of Divine Wrath; and all for us! Look yet a little longer, and behold what Pangs of Death are upon him, till at length he yielded up the Ghost; and all for us! Listen a while, and you will hear him crying out, in the most doleful and pitiful Manner imaginable, *My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?* and all for us still! Think seriously on these Things, when ye are set down at the Lord's Table, until your Hearts be suitably affected with them, and your Love raised to its highest Pitch.

7thly, Let us draw near to God, in the Exercise of *brotherly Love*, I mean, Love to our Neighbour, even perfect Charity towards all Man-

The great Advantage of SERM. III.

Mankind. Our holy Christian Religion obliges us to love one another as Brethren; nay, to love our Neighbour as our selves. The Sacrament of the *Lord's Supper* is a *Love-Feast*; and therefore none should draw near to God in this Ordinance, but such as are free from all Rancour and Malice, all Hatred and Revenge, all Envy and Grudge in their Minds against any of Mankind: For Hatred and Enmity, and the like Sins, seem more manifestly than most other Sins, to pierce the Wounds of Christ, and they stand in a direct Opposition to the Nature and Tendency of this Ordinance, which, I say, being a *Love-Feast*, must by no Means be kept with the *Leaven of Malice and Wickedness*, but with the *unleavened Bread of Sincerity and Love*. He that comes to the Lord's Table, with his Heart full of Passion and Anger against his Neighbour, what doth he, but rend and tear the Body of Christ, and as much as in him lies, separates and divides one Part of it from another; and, I may say, in a most formal Manner, kills the Lord of Life and Glory afresh in his Members, who in Scripture are called *the Body of Christ*. He that hates his Brother is, in the Scripture Sense, a *Murderer*: And what Right hath a Murderer to the sacred Symbols of *Christ's Body and Blood*? Without brotherly Love, which is the *Bond of Perfection*, Men but profane this holy Ordinance, which was instituted for this among other Ends, that it might be a Testimony of that Love and Union which should be among all that profess the Christian Religion. I remember, our blessed Saviour gives us this memorable

1 Joh. 3.
15.

able Charge: *If thou bring thy Gift to the Altar, and there rememberest that thy Brother hath ought against thee; there leave thy Gift before the Altar, and go thy Way, first be reconciled to thy Brother; and then come, and offer thy Gift.* Plainly intimating this much to us, that no Service we can perform to God, will be acceptable to him, unless we be in perfect Charity with all Mankind.

8thly, We must also draw near to God, with a thankful Disposition of Mind, for all the Instances of his Goodness we daily meet with. Such a Disposition as this, is both proper and necessary for the Lord's Table. It was a very significant Name which in the Primitive Times of the Church they usually gave to this Sacrament, when they called it the *Eucharist*: That is, a *Thanksgiving*. You know, this Ordinance was instituted to be a standing Memorial of the Death of Christ. And certainly, when we shew forth his Death, it should be with the utmost Joy and Thankfulness on our Part; for by his Death, our Ransom from Hell and Wrath was payed: By it God is graciously reconciled to us, and we are restored to his Favour; by it we are made the Children of God, and adopted into his Family; by it we have the Image of God repaired in us, and are made Partakers of the Divine Nature: By it we have Access to God, and are strengthened for our Christian Work and Warfare: By it we obtain Victory over Sin, Satan, the World, our Selves, Death, and all the other Enemies of our Souls: From how great Misery did his Death save us? And how great Favour did

2. Pet. 2

4.

he thereby Purchase for us? And therefore, when we remember these Things, how should our Souls magnify the Lord our Saviour, and bless his Holy Name? How should our Souls and all that is within us, be stirred up to thank him for all his gracious Benefits bestowed upon us; and especially, for his unspeakable Gift, in bestowing his only Son upon us, when we were yet Enemies to him? When we are at the *Lord's Table*, this should be one Part of our Work and Exercise, in the highest Strains of Praise, to bless God, for sending his Son, to be the *Propitiation* for our Sins. We should evermore enter his Gates and Courts with Praise, and bring an Offering with us, presenting our selves a living Sacrifice, Holy, acceptable to God, which is our reasonable Service. Our Spirits should rejoice in God, who hath done so great Things for us: And the Sense of his Goodness should bind us to his Service for ever, and make us only his, and wholly his.

9thly, We must likewise draw near to God, with fixed Resolutions of doing our Duty better for the Time to come. The Holiest Man on Earth must needs acknowledge, that he comes far short of what he ought to be, and of what he ought to do: For who can say, he hath made either his *Heart* or his Way Perfect before God? Here's another Part of your Work and Exercise at the *Lord's Table*, even, to humble your selves for your former Neglects, and to engage to be more careful and exact for the Future. Here we are solemnly to engage, that we will henceforth deny all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and live soberly,

soberly, righteously and godly, in this present World, and be faithful to God, even unto the Death: Here we are to engage, that we will do nothing that he has forbidden us, nor neglect any Thing he has commanded us, be it never so difficult and hazardous; and that we will do every Thing he has commanded us, in the same Manner he requires it to be done. Here we are to engage, that we will walk in all his Commandments and Ordinances blameless; and that we will be stedfast and unmoveable, always abounding in his Work: Here we must bind our selves by an Oath and a Curse, That we will keep his Laws, walk in his Ways, take up our Cross and follow him whither-so-ever he goes, and never desert his Service, tho' we should be hated and persecuted never so much: Here we must engage to submit cheerfully to whatever Lot he, in his holy and wise Providence, shall think fit to carve out to us, be it never so mean, and be it never so full of Crosses and Difficulties, without murmuring or quarrelling with any of his Administration. But then, you must engage nothing in your own Strength, but promise all in the Name and in the Strength of the Lord Jehovah: For without him we can do Nothing. And if you indeed depend upon him, his Grace will be sufficient for you, and his Strength shall be made perfect in Weakness. You will be able to do all Things, thro' Christ strengthening you! By acting a close Dependence upon him, ye will derive a Kind of Omnipotence from him: He will make his Yoke easie, and his Burden light to you. And in this Ordinance, if ye have Faith in a lively Exer-

cise, he will give you such a Measure of spiritual Strength, as will fortify you against Temptations, strengthen you for Duties, and enable you to bear Afflictions and Trials. We come from this holy Table (says one of the Ancients) Breathing out Strength, terrible to the Devils themselves.

Lastly, I must not forget to observe to you, that we must always draw near to God, *in and thro' the blessed Lord Jesus Christ*: For if we come to God without him, we cannot be made welcome, it being only for the Sake of *Jesus*, that either our selves or our Services can be acceptable to God. Our Persons are vile, and the best of our Performances are lame and defective; and therefore, neither the one nor the other can be any Way pleasing to God, unless they be sanctified by the Spirit of *Jesus*, and perfum'd with the sweet Incense of his Merits and Intercession. God (says the *Apostle Paul*) *hath made us accepted in the Beloved*. That is, in his beloved Son Christ. In all our Approaches and Addresses to God, we should desire he may look upon us in the Face of his *Anointed*, that he may accept of us for his Sake, and be well pleased with us in him. Is it not a Thing very strange, that any Man should presume to come into God, without Christ: For out of Christ, he is a *consuming Fire* to Sinners, and when we come to God without *Christ*, what have we to defend us from his Wrath: Truly Nothing at all. But, if we come to him in and thro' *Christ*, we are safe, and are sure to be always graciously received. Let us therefore bless God, that we have Access to him through

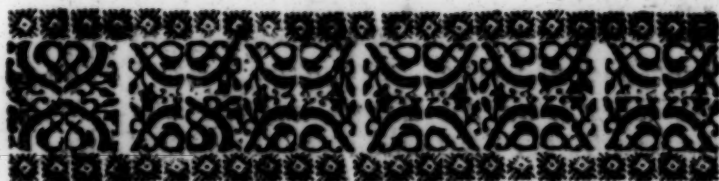
Ephes. i.
6.

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through his own dear Son, in whom he is always well pleased. The Fall of *Adam* had indeed blockt up our Way to God: But now we have Access to him again, through a new and a living Way, even *Jesus Christ*, who is *the Way, the Truth, and the Life*. So that whosoever shall come to God thro' him, shall in no wise be rejected. Nay; he allows us to come with Boldness into the Throne of Grace. *John 14. 6.* Let us then follow the *Apostle's* Direction: *Heb. 4. 16.* Having an High Priest over the House of God; let us draw near with a pure Heart, in full Assurance of Faith, having our Hearts sprinkled from an evil Conscience, and our Bodies washed with pure Water.





SERMON IV.

The great Advantage of
drawing near to God.

PSAL. lxxiii. 28.

*But it is good for me to draw near to
God, &c.*

THE Apostle *Paul*, in the Description he gives us of our natural States, presents us with a very Melancholy

Ephes. 2. *View of our extreme Misery, viz. That at that Time ye were without Christ, being Aliens from the Common-wealth of Israel, and Strangers from the Covenants of Promise, having no Hope, and without God in the World. That Men are not weary of such a miserable Condition, flows from their Want of a due Consideration of it: For, who that really considers, how that, while he is without God in the World,*

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he is not capable of the least Degree of true Happiness, would remain in that woful Condition, but hasten out of it? Especially considering how seriously we are in Scripture pressed to *draw near to God*, and how much it is our interest to do so. In the proceeding Sermon, I have shown you, what it is to *draw near to God*, and how we should draw near to him: And, I am now to demonstrate to you, that it is certainly good, every Way good for us to draw near to him, which I hope, shall be made plain from the following Considerations.

I. When we are near God, we are in a *State of great Safety*; whereas we are never so, nor can we be so, if we are far from him. Now there is a twofold Safety, which Nearness to God brings us to.

1. It makes us safe in Case of Dangers and Afflictions. When Dangers threaten us, or when Afflictions are actually upon us, let us in either of these Cases get near God, and he will take Care of us. This was the Course David took, whenever he was apprehensive of any impending Trouble: *Be not far from me* (says he) *for Trouble is near*. And again, *What Time I am afraid, I will trust in thee*. When the Chicken perceives the Bird of Prey approaching, it runs to the Dame, and she covers it with her Wings: So when the Child of God apprehends a Storm coming, immediately he flies to the *Munition of Rocks*, and then is safe *under the Shadow of the Almighty*: for he will *hide him until these Calamities be overpast and gone*. The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in Safety, and no Evil shall come near

near his dwelling Place, so as to do him any real Hurt, so long as he keeps near God, he is safe. God has encouraged his People to come to him, in all their Troubles and Fears.

Pfal. 50. 15. Call upon me in the Day of Trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me. And how friendly, how tenderly and indulgently does he speak to them, by the Prophet? Come my

Pfal. 26. 28. People, enter thou into thy Chambers, and shut thy Doors about thee, : Hide thy self for a small Moment, until the Indignation be overpast. Whatever Calamities we meet with, let us get near God, and he will put such Strength in us, as will make them light and easie to us ; and in due Time he will bring us out of them. But alas ! when Afflictions come upon a wicked Man, or an Hypocrite, in what a miserable Plight are they ? For they are far from God, and are left to bear the Burden alone. Wo to him that is alone when he falleth : For he hath none to help him up.

Eecl. 4. 10.

2. As they are safe from Troubles, that are near God, so are they safe from Temptations. The wicked and ungodly live without God in the World ; and this makes them an easy Prey to every Temptation, and to every Lust ; Whereas, a Temptation does not easily reach a gracious Man ; or rather, it cannot reach him at all, so as to conquer him, so long as he keeps near God, and the nearer we live to God, we are so much the better fortified against Temptations. The Reason of this is plain ; because, all the Strength we have for our Christian Work and Warfare, comes from God ; and therefore we can never expect Strength for our Work, unless we live near

him. Here then is that which invincibly secures the Perseverance of the Saints. Satan battles them so furiously and incessantly with his Temptations, that it were impossible for them to stand their Ground, if they did not live near *God*, and if they did not live dependingly upon *God*. But because they live near him, let the Floods of Persecutions come, let the Rains of Afflictions descend, and let the Storms of Temptations beat and blow never so violently upon them; *kept they are*, and kept they shall be, by the Almighty Power of *God*, through Faith unto Salvation.

II. To be near God, is the certain Way to get our Graces nourished and increased: And therefore it must be certainly good for us to draw near to him. Tho' God has indeed planted his Grace in the Soul of every Believer; yet, if they are not careful to live near God, they will soon find their Graces grow weak, and begin to fall under a Decay; and they will not be able to exert themselves in their Christian Work and Warfare, with that Vigour they were wont to do; but they will be like *Sampson* when his Hair was cut, weak and feeble, unfit for Duties, unfit for Sufferings, unfit for Afflictions, and unfit for Temptations; that is, unable to match and conquer them. But, if we are careful to live near God, Grace will daily gather Strength in our Souls: And the nearer God we live, we will be the stronger in the Grace of God, and therefore the fitter for our Work and Duty, as Christians: For how can we but grow in Grace, if we live near him who is the God of all Grace? In one Word, we can-

not

Psal. 84.
4, 7.

Isaiah 40.
31.

Exod. 14.
30, 31.

not live a Life of Grace, if we live not near God. I suppose it was this Consideration that moved *David* to pronounce them *Blessed that dwell in God's House*, where God is to be found; for he immediately subjoins, *they go from Strength to Strength*; which may be understood of their going from one Degree of Grace and spiritual Strength, to another. And 'tis promised, *That they who wait on the Lord, shall renew their Strength*. The Meaning is, they shall have Strength sufficient to labour, Strength sufficient to wrestle, Strength sufficient to bear, and Strength sufficient to resist. When *Moses* had been forty Days, and forty Nights with God upon the Mount, 'tis said, *The Skin of his Face did shine*, and that with such a dazzling Lustre, that the *Israelites* were not able to look upon him, until he covered his Face with a Vail. What was the Cause of all this extraordinary Brightness? I assure you, 'twas owing wholly to his having been so near God, for so long a Time together.

III. It is the very Food of the Soul, to live near God. The Life of our Bodies can as easily be maintained without the Supply of our natural Food, as the Life of the Soul without living near God. I suppose, the Reason why the Souls of profane and ungodly Men are like *Pharaoh's* lean Kine, monstrously lean and ill-favoured, is, because they live in a State of Distance and Estrangement from God, the Fountain of Life and Happiness: Whereas gracious Souls, that live near God, are continually satisfied with the Goodness of his House, as with Marrow and with Fat,

by

by which Means they are kept in a thriving Condition. They grow up daily into a more perfect Conformity to him, with whom they delight to live in a continual Fellowship and Acquaintance. Hence the *Psalmist* observes, *that those that are planted in the House of God shall flourish in the Courts of our God: they shall bring forth Fruit in old Age, they shall be fat and flourishing.* You see the godly are here compared to Trees planted, and Trees that bear Fruit. Others when they are old, leave off bearing: But in God's Trees, the Strength of Grace does not fail with the Strength of Nature: The last Days of the Saints sometimes are the best Days, and their last Works their best Works. In them are to be seen, even in old Age, all the Instances of a lively Devotion, and an useful Conversation, by which God is glorified, and others are edified. The *Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*, wherein the People of God have usually more than ordinary Communion with him, is an Ordinance that hath a special Tendency towards the Nourishment of their Souls, if they are but duly qualify'd for it; for it is a *Feast of fat Things, full of Marrow, a Feast of Wines on the Lees well refined.* Nay, the Lord's Table has many Times been to his People, like the Mount of Transfiguration. And how should this one Consideration recommend this excellent Ordinance to us, and oblige us to a frequent and devout Participation of it?

IV. It must needs be good for us to draw near to God, because whenever a Soul draws near unto him, he opens his rich Treasures

Rev. 1. 5,
6.

Treasures bestowing liberally, and whatsoever is necessary for him. *Draw near to God* then, and he will free you from the Bondage of *Satan*: He will knock off the Fetters of your Captivity, with which your Souls have been bound, and ye shall no more be Slaves, but free; and if God make you free, then shall ye be free indeed. *Draw near to God*, and he will pardon your Sins; he will say unto you, *Be of good cheer, your Sins are forgiven you*: He will wash you in his Son's Blood from all your Iniquities, and make you Kings and Priests unto himself, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever. *Draw near to God*, and he will give you all that he, as Lord of Heaven and Earth can bestow upon you; and he has all that's in the upper and nether World to dispose of: So that ye can ask nothing from him, but what he will bestow, providing it be really good for you. Nay, *What is your Petition?* and it shall be granted; and what is your Request? and it shall be performed, not to the half only, but even to the whole of his Kingdom. Open your Mouths wide, and he will fill them with the best Things. *Draw near to God*, and he'll be your God: And that's infinitely more, than if he should tell you, all the Kingdoms of the World, and the Glory of them, shall be yours. *Draw near to God*, and he will give you Gold tried in the Fire, to make you rich; white Raiment to cloath you with, that the Shame of your Nakedness may not appear; and he will anoint the Eyes of your Understanding with Eye-salve, which will give you a clear Discerning in Things: He will

give

give you *Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption.* Once more, *draw near to God*, and he will justify you freely, he will adopt you graciously, he will sanctify you thoroughly, and he will save you eternally. *Draw near to God*, and all the Promises of 1. Tim. his Word shall be yours: And *Godliness hath* 4. 8. *the Promises of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come.* Whether *Paul* or *Apollos* or 1. Cor. *Cephas*, or the *World*, or *Death*, or *Life*, or 3. 32. *Things present, or Things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.* In one Word, if you'll draw near to God, he will give *Grace here, and Glory hereafter*, and no Psal. 84. *good Thing will he withhold from you.* And when 11. ye are, at the *Lord's Table*, he will satisfy you with the Goodness of his House, and fill you with all *spiritual Blessings in heavenly Places in Christ Jesus.*

Use. You see then, it is surely good, every Way good, to *draw near to God*: And therefore let me beseech every one of you to *draw near to him.* you can't but see 'tis your Interest to do so, unless you wilfully shut your Eyes. I beseech you consider, how many valuable Blessings and Privileges you deprive your selves off, and how many Miseries you are involv'd in, so long as you live in a State of Distance from God. Give me Leave therefore to expostulate a little with you upon this Head. *Wherefore do ye spend Money for* Isa. 55. 2. *that which is not Bread, and your Labour for that which satisfieth not?* They are but vain; uncertain, perishing Things, that ye are spending your precious Time and Strength about; Things that can neither profit nor nourish your

your Souls: Poor, empty childish Bables, nor really worth your While to look after. Hearken diligently into God, draw near to him; and ye shall eat really *that which is Good*, and your Souls shall delight themselves in *Fatness*. Incline your Ear, hearken to and answer the Call of the Gospel: Come unto *him*, and ye shall Live; and he will make with you an everlasting Covenant, even the sure Mercies of David.

Isa. 55. 3.

Mat. 26.
41.

Consider your present Necessity and Danger. So long as ye are without God in the World, ye are every Moment expos'd to his Wrath, and there is nothing to screen you from it. It concerns you to think what would become of you, if you should die in this miserable State, being far from God: Verrily, in this Case, ye shall be banished from his gracious Presence forevermore; this shall be your Doom from the Almighty, *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* They that in their Hearts are now, saying to the Almighty, *depart from us, for we desire not the Knowledge of thee, nor of thy Ways;* the Time will come, when they would be glad to draw near to him, but shall not be allowed. Are ye so fond of your own Ruine and Damnation, that nothing can stop you? Do ye think Hell a desirable Place? Or is it a pleasant Thing to be damned? Are ye resolved to take up your eternal Abode in the *Lake that burneth with Fire and Brimstone* for ever? Are ye resolved to dwell with devouring Flames? Is the Devil a good Master, that you cannot be perswaded to leave his cursed Service?

Service? Or, is God so hard a Master, that ye are so very averse to engage in his excellent and delightful Service, refusing so much as once to come near him? Do you think that the Devil can be better to you than God, or that his Wages are better than God's? I pray you therefore, consider what you are doing, and hasten out of this miserable State: For, I assure you, it will be Bitterness in the End.

But perhaps some of you may say, we are indeed resolved to draw near unto God afterwards, tho' we do it not now. But I beseech you, consider these three Things seriously with your selves.

First, your Life is the most uncertain Thing imaginable. *Boast not they self of to Morrow* Prov. 27: (says Solomon) *for thou knowest not what a Day* 1. *may bring forth.* Every Moment of Time ye are subject to the Arrest of Death; *for what* Jam. 4: *is your Life? It is even a Vapour that appear-* 14: *eth for a little Time, and then vanisheth away.* What do you know, but God may say unto you, as he said to the rich Glutton in the Parable, *Thou Fool, this Night thy Soul shall be* Luk. 12: *required of thee.* And then, what will become 20: of you? We never saw that Moment wherein we could say, we were sure of another. A very short Time may bring the strongest and healthiest Man on Earth to his Grave; nay, some sudden Accident may cut him off in the Twinkling of an Eye. Let us then hasten to lay hold upon eternal Life, while the Door of Mercy stands open to us, and while there is yet Hope in Israel concerning us. *Let us* (as the Apostle speak to the Hebrews) *fear,*

Heb. 4. 1. *fear, least a Promise being left us of entering into his Rest, any of us should seem to come short of it.*

2^{dly}, For ought you know, this may be the last Call that some of you may have: Many Calls have been given you (for I am speaking to them that are yet without God in the World) and ye have slighted them all, And it may be God is now taking his Farewell of some of you: For, I assure you, *His*

Gen. 6. 3. *Spirit will not always strive with Man.* God has spared you long: But you must not expect he will always spare you: No, your Obstinacy may soon provoke him to speak to

Psal. 2. 5. *you in his Wrath, and to vex you in his sore Displeasure.* A Time is coming, when he will shew no Pity nor Compassion towards you,

if ye continue to abuse his Goodness, and to live at a Distance from him: Yea he will forget to be gracious to you. When the Lord speaks once, none should say, I'll stay till he speaks a second Time: And if he condescends to speak a second Time, do not expect he will always speak; but follow the

Psal. 95.

7. 9. 11.

While it is yet called to Day, hear his Voice, and harden not your Hearts, lest ye provoke him to swear in his Wrath, that ye shall never enter into his Rest. As it fared with Esau, so it may fare with you: He came not soon enough to get his Father's Blessing: and you know how that afterwards, when he would have inherited the Blessing, he was rejected: For he found no Place of Repentance, tho' he sought it carefully with Tears.

Heb. 12.

17.

3^{dly}, consider, That if once the Door be shut upon you, your Condition will be most fearful. God is now calling to you, and stretch-

stretching out his Hand towards you, and you have hitherto refused to come unto him; and if you continue to do so, the Time will come, *when ye shall call to him, and he will not answer you.* That's a most remarkable and awakening Passage which we meet with in the Book of Proverbs to this Purpose, which I wish every one would lay seriously to Heart. *Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my Hand, and no Man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my Council, and would none of my Reproof: I will also laugh at your Calamity, I will mock when your Fear cometh; when your Fear cometh as Desolation, and your Destruction cometh as a Whirlwind: When Distress and Anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not Answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated Instruction, and did not chuse the Fear of the Lord: They would none of my Council, they despised all my Reproof. Therefore they shall eat of the Fruit of their own Way, and be filled with their own Devices. They that will not seek the Lord, while he may be found, shall not find him at all.* Prov. 1. 25-32. Isa. 55

Let me therefore adjure you by the living God, and by all the Care and Concern you ought to have for your Precious and immortal Souls, see that you live no more in a State of Distance from God, but draw near to him, while he yet waits to be Gracious to you: For it were better for you, that a Millstone were hanged about your Neck, and ye cast into the Depths of the Sea, than to continue in the State wherein you are. And, to encourage you to draw near to him, he has pro-

- Jam. 4. 8. *misled, if ye do so, he will likewise draw near to you. The Meaning is, he will draw near to you by his Grace, and by the Comforts of his Spirit, and by his Benefits: Nay, he will not only draw near to you, but he will keep you near him, and daily increase your Acquaintance with him. O what a pleasant and comfortable Life do they live, that live in a blessed Nearness and Acquaintance with*
- Psal. 84. 10. *God? One Day in his Courts is better than a Thousand any where else: 'Tis infinitely better than all the Enjoyments of Sense: Nay, to have one Hour of Nearness with God, is better than a Thousand Ages else where. Thou*
- Psal. 4. 7. *hast put Gladness in my Heart, more than they, when their Corn and their Wine abounded. Nay, what shall I say? To be near God, is to have Heaven upon Earth: For wherein consists the Felicity of the glorified Saints? Does it not lye in the full Enjoyment of God to all Eternity? The heavenly Felicity lyes in being for ever with the Lord; that is, 'tis a State of everlasting and immediate Nearness with God.*

But then, it must not be imagined, that you can still live in your Sins, that you can still love them and delight in them, and draw near to God too: No, ye can never draw near to him, nor will he draw near to you, until you first hate your Sins, and forsake them: For (as you have it in that forecited Place) *draw nigh unto God, and he will draw nigh unto you: But (might one say) is there not something to be done by us, previous to this? Yes: Cleanse your Hands, ye Sinners; and purify your Hearts, ye double minded. So*

that,

that, in Order to your drawing nigh unto God, and having God to draw nigh unto you, there are somethings to be done by you.

(1.) Your Lives must be holy and blameless. Without this, ye can have no Nearness with God, *who is glorious in Holiness*: For *what Fellowship hath Righteousness with Unrighteousness? What Communion hath Light with Darkness? And what Concord hath Christ with Belial?* There can be no Nearness nor Acquaintance with a Holy God, so long as Men continue in their Sin and Rebellion against him: For *he is of purer Eyes, than to behold Iniquity. And he is angry with the Wicked every Day.* Sinners shall not enter into his gracious Presence, nor can the Workers of Iniquity stand before him: And therefore it should be our constant Study to mortify our Lusts, to forsake and be divorced from them, as much as we can: But when we draw near to God in holy Duties, and much more, when we are to partake of the *Lord's Supper*; we should then in a special Manner, put all *Iniquity far from our Tabernacles*, otherwise we can have no Communion with him. profane, graceless People can have no Nearness with God: For both their Persons and Duties are an Abomination to him. God will be served in the Beauty of Holiness: For *Holiness becometh his House for ever.* Tho' David was already got near God, yet in his ordinary and daily Approaches to him, he was always careful to *wash his Hands in Innocence, and so to encompass God's Altar*: Because he knew, that otherwise he would offend God by his Duties. So that, you see,

2. Cor. 6.
14, 15.

Hab. 1.
13.
Psal. 7.
11.

Psal. 93.
5.

Psal. 26.
6.

to qualify our selves for drawing near to God, it is necessary to reform our Lives; and to be holy in all Manner of Conversation: And the more holy and unblameable our Lives are, we shall have so much the more Nearness with him.

(2.) Our Hearts must be holy, as well as our Lives. Under the Law, if any Man presumed to offer a Sacrifice unto God, having any Ceremonial Uncleaness upon him, he was to be cut off from among his People. And truly, if we presume to draw near unto God in any Duty, with unholy Hearts, with Hearts that are still in love with our Sins, and not yet divorced from them, we certainly will expose our selves to the Wrath of him who has declared himself to

Exod. 20. *be a jealous God, and has expressly assured us,*
 5. *he will be sanctified in them that come nigh him:*

Lev. 10. *And how can we expect Communion with*
 3.

Exod. 15. *him, who is glorious in Holiness, so long as*
 11. *our Hearts are not right with him? The*

Scripture makes it a necessary Qualification in him that would ascend unto the Hill of God, and stand in his holy Place, that he be One that hath clean Hands, and a pure Heart.

Psal. 24.

3. 4.

Psal. 66.

18.

And David says elsewhere, If I regard Iniquity in my Heart, the Lord will not hear me:

The Meaning is, if I have so much as any favourable Thoughts of Sin, the Lord will not accept of any of my Services, nor can I expect any Answer of Peace from him. The greatest Ornament we can put upon the Duties of Religion, is, to perform them with holy Hearts. And if our Hearts are not yet cleansed from our Filthiness, God will throw back

back the Dung of our Sacrifices upon our Faces.

(3.) We must likewise see to get our Hearts taken off from the World, and all our worldly Concerns, when we are to draw near unto God: For if we suffer any earthly Thing to possess our Hearts, when we address our selves to him, this will exceedingly disturb and discompose us, and render us careless and formal in the Service of God; and if we are so, we cannot get near God, nor serve him acceptably. To serve the God of Heaven, or to think we can get near him, with earthly Minds and Affections, what unaccountable Folly is this? At other Times indeed, God allows us, in Measure and Moderation, to mind the necessary Affairs of this Life: But, when we are about to draw near to him in any of the Duties of his Worship, we must separate our selves from all common Uses, that we may attend upon the Lord without Distraction. There were a Set of vile Hypocrites, among the Prophet *Ezekiel's* Hearers: Who had a great Profession of Religion: *For they did sit before him, in Appearance like God's People,* while he was delivering the Lord's Message to them; but they were not what they seemed to be. They had a Kind of outward Devotion, and in the mean Time, they were Nothing but disssembling Hypocrites: *For their Hearts went out after their Covetousness.* When we draw near to God, we should always leave our worldly Cares and Thoughts behind us, as *Abraham* left his *Servants* and the *Asses* at the Bottom of the Hill, when he was going Ezek. 33.
31.
Gen. 22.
5.

to offer Sacrifice to the Lord. He used them as a Help in his Journey; but when he came to the Mount where he was to worship, he bids them stay below. When *Tobiah* and *Sanballat* sent to *Nehemiah*, desiring he might come and confer with them about some necessary Business: No, says he, *I cannot come for the Work is great, that I have to do.* We are about to present our selves before the Lord, at his holy Table; and this is a great and weighty Work, which cannot be done to Purpose, if our Minds are taken up with other Things: Therefore let us beware our Hearts be not entangled with earthly Concerns, but let us loose our Affections and disengage them as much as possible, from every Thing that is earthly; for this great Work we are going about, requires the greatest Heavenly-mindedness we can attain to.

Neh. 6. 3.

And now, for a Conclusion of this Subject allow me to speak a few Things by Way of Advice to such of you as have indeed drawn near to God, or shall get near him.

First then, wrestle importunately with God, to abide with you, and keep you near him: As 'tis said of the two *Disciples* that met with *Christ* by the Way, as they were going to *Emmaus*; *When they drew nigh unto the Village, he made as tho' he would have gone further; but they constrained him, saying, Abide with us.* I may say, our Lord in a Manner waits for the Believer's inviting, yea, and urging and pressing him to abide with him, as he said to *Jacob*, *let me go.* What? Could not a mighty *Angel*, could not the *Angel of the*

Luke 24.
23.Gen. 32.
26.

the Covenant get clear of *Jacob's Grapples*? Doubtless he could; but he would thus put an Honour on *Jacob's Faith and Prayer*, and as it were, take a further Trial of his Constancy: *Let me go.* This is as much upon the Matter as if he had said; I'll not go, if thou wilt but hold me still, and if thou really desires me to stay. If once we get near God, he will never depart from us, so long as we are at Pains to keep him still, and to constrain him to abide with us: Therefore let us look to our selves, that we lose not these Things that we have wrought. God will abide with us, so long as we abide with him, but, if ever we forsake him or his Ways, he will abide no longer with us.

2dly, See that ye be holy and watchful thro' the whole Course of your Lives: For the least Degree of unholiness or untenderness in your Walk, may provoke him to stand at a Distance from you, and put you in as unhappy Circumstances as the Spouse was in, when she complain'd again and again, that she sought him whom her Soul loved; she sought him, but she could not find him. So long as you are exactly holy and circumspect, God will not hide his Face from you. He never suffered any of his Children to fall under Desertion, but when they were always to blame for it themselves; giving him just Provocation to hide his gracious Face from them. As long as we walk close with God, he will continue our spiritual Comforts with us, and we need not expect then one Minute longer. Therefore grieve not the holy Spirit of Promise, wherewith ye are sealed to the Day of

Cant. 3.
2, 3.

Ephes. 1.
13.

Redemption; who is the Life of your Souls, and the Life of your Comforts.

3^{dly}. Perswade your selves that 'twill be the deepest Affliction you can meet with, to have God hiding his Face from you, and looking upon you with an angry Countenance. There's nothing that toucheth the Believer more sensibly than this, 'Tis with the Believer under the Hidings of God's Countenance, as it was with *Micah*, when the *Danites* had robbed him of his Gods: He lookt upon himself as a Man quite undone. You have taken away my Gods which I have made, and my Priest, and you are gone away; and what have I more? So says the gracious Soul, what have I more, that will do me good, or bring me in any Comfort, if God hides his Face from me? We should reckon an Interest in God and Communion with him, incomparably our richest Possession, and the Loss of God's Smiles, the sorest Loss we can meet with. Wo unto us, if he depart from us; for what have we more? Deserted Souls, that are lamenting after the Lord, may well admire, as *Micah* did, that any should ask them, What ails them? For the Tokens of God's Love are for the Time suspended: Their Comforts are withdrawn, and what have they more

4^{thly}, Beware of Security, and of every Thing that hath but the least Tendency towards it. Hath Christ brought you into his *Banqueting House*, and made his Banner over you to be Love? Remember, 'twas never his Design in bringing you there, and in entertaining you there, that ye should fall asleep in

in his Arms. Many of God's People in such prosperous Circumstances, have been strangely puffed up; they have been lifted up above Measure in their own Minds, and by this Means they have turned secure, and God has been provoked to hide his Face from them, and then their Condition was as melancholy and gloomy, as ever it was prosperous and pleasant before. You know how it sat'd with *David*, the Man after God's own Heart. *In my Prosperity I said, I shall never be moved.* He foolishly dream'd, that his prosperous Circumstances would never alter: But behold what followed upon this: *Thou didst hide thy Face, and I was troubled.* And then, as you are to beware of Security, so you must guard against every Thing that has but the least Tendency towards it, such as, too much Care and Concern about your worldly Comforts, and the like. For I assure you, nothing is more apt to breed Security, than Men's becoming earthly in their Affections and Desires. As therefore you value your present Comforts, and desire the Continuance and Increase of them, see that ye keep your Hearts at as great a Distance from the World, as possibly you can.

5thly, Be punctual and constant in the Performance of every religious Duty, whether publick, private, or more secret: And be sure that ye be spiritual, fervent and devout in them. For there's nothing more dangerous, than to neglect any Part of your Duty to God, or yet to be careless and formal in the Performance of it. Whereas, if ye be faithful to God, and if ye be fervent in Spirit, serving

Psal. 30.
6, 8.

ing him; that will be the Way, not only to maintain, but increase your Communion with him. And as long as ye do this, I may safely say, God will never hide his Face from you, but will be still making new Discoveries of his Love to you. See then, that your *Souls follow hard after God* in every Duty, and let your *Hearts and your Flesh cry out for the living God*. Say, as once some of *Christ's* Hearers said to him, *Lord evermore give us of this Bread to eat*. The more large and earnest you are in your Desires of this Kind, it will be the better for you.

Joh. 6.
24.

6thly, You must take special Care to have Grace in a constant and vigorous Exercise in your Souls. For I assure you, Grace is the only Means of our Communion with God; take away Grace from the Soul of the *Believer*, and he is *without God in the World*, and in a woful State of Distance from him, as well as others. Now, the more strong and vigorous Grace be, our Communion with God will be the more full and uninterrupted. But if you suffer Grace to grow languid and faint, it cannot be long till your Communion with God meet with a sad Interruption. The Actings and Exercises of Grace are the Things that, as 'twere fasten the Soul to God, and make us cleave fast to him: And so long as we cleave to him, he will never leave us; nay, he will never withdraw the Manifestations of his Love from us, but will make his Abode with us, and we shall live a Life of blessed Fellowship and Intercourse with him, which is the most pleasant and comfortable Life that can be.

7thly,

7thly, Improve your Nearness with God well: And that these two Ways.

First, Improve it for your own Advantage: Hath the ever blessed God brought you near himself? Then take Care to secure his gracious Presence with you, by laying open the whole State of your Souls to him from Time to Time. I'm sure, there's not one among us all, who may not find him constant Employment, if we be but rightly acquainted with our selves. Let me therefore intreat you, to open freely your Condition to him: Complain of all your spiritual Sores; bemoan your spiritual Blindness, your remaining Ignorance, and seek to be more and more enlightened: Lament your spiritual Nakedness and Poverty, and seek to have your Souls richly furnished with every Divine Quality; and in a Word, to be made *all glorious within*, that your Souls may be a fit Habitation for him to dwell in. Complain of your Corruptions, and seek to get them more and more mortify'd every Day. You have daily Temptations to wrestle with, many bloody Battles to fight against the Devil, the World and the Flesh: Seek Strength from God to overcome all these. You have many Difficulties and Dangers to encounter, before you can get to Heaven, and your Strength is but small: Ask Wisdom from the only wise God, to carry you thro' them all. You have many Crosses and Afflictions to bear, and you'll undoubtedly sink under the Weight of them, if you are left to bear the Burden alone: Beg that God may either bring down your Burden to your Strength, or bring up your

1 Cor. 10.
13.

your Strength to your Burden: Pray that he may not suffer you to be tempted (or tried) above what you are able, but with the Temptation (or trial) may also make a Way for your Escape, that you may be able to bear it. You have many weighty and difficult Duties to perform, wherein you'll certainly miscarry, if you be left to your selves in these Things: Therefore pray that he may may be Surety for you, and put Strength in you, to do what he requires of you, and furnish you for every good Word and Work. You have many precious Seasons of Grace to improve, and you'll certainly mismanage them, if you trust to your selves, and lean to your own Understanding: And therefore pray, that he may give you Grace sufficient, to improve every Price, he puts in your Hands, to get Wisdom. As long as you are near God, you have an excellent Opportunity of having your Souls put in a thriving Condition: See then that you carefully improve your Day of Grace.

Secondly, Improve your Nearness with God, to the Advantage of the Church of God; and the Interest of Religion in general, as well as to your own particular Advantage. Tho' every Christian's great Care should be, to have his Soul saved in the Day of the Lord, yet our Cares must not terminate here. If we are sound Christians, we are Members of *Christ's mystical Body*; and therefore should have a feeling Sympathy with all that are the Fellow-members of it. We that enjoy the pure Ordinances of the Gospel in Plenty, and without Disturbance, should remember and pity them that are suffering for Truth. and

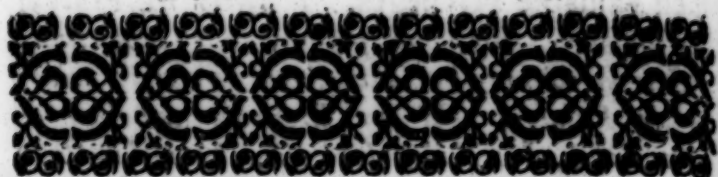
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and Righteousness sake, and are depriv'd of such valuable Privileges. *Pray for the Peace of* Psal. 122. *Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love thee: 6, 9. Peace be within thy Walls, and Prosperity within thy Palaces. For my Brethren and Companions Sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee: Because of the House of the Lord our God, I will seek thy Good.* Perhaps some of you cannot act much for the Interest of Religion, and for the Peace and Prosperity of the Church of God; but you may and you ought to pray for it.

You'll see how the Psalmist oblig'd himself to this: *If I forget Jerusalem, let my Right Hand forget her Cunnings: If I do not remember Psal. 137. 6. thee, let my Tongue cleave to the Roof of my Mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem to my chief Joy.*

Now unto the King Eternal, Immortal, and Invisible; to the only wise God our Saviour, be Glory and Dominion World without End. *Amen.*





SERMON V.

The godly Man's Privilege and Happiness.

PSAL. iv. 3.

*But know that the Lord hath set apart
him that is godly, for himself: The
Lord will hear when I call unto him.*

THERE are many Things in Religion, which, if duly considered, cannot but recommend it to every Man: For let the unthinking Part of Mankind judge never so meanly and harshly of it, doubtless there is the greatest Profit, Pleasure and Safety attending Religion. *Godliness is profitable unto all Things, having the Promise of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come. Wisdom's Ways are Ways of Pleasantness, and all her Paths are Peace. And who is he that will harm you,*
if

1. Tim. 4.
8.

Prov. 3.
17.

if ye be followers of that which is Good? None ^{1. Pet. 3.}
 can do us the least Hurt, without exposing ^{13.}
 themselves to the Wrath of him who hath said,
Vengeance is mine, I will repay, if indeed Men ^{Rom. 12.}
 look only upon the dark Side of Religion, and ^{19.}
 consider these outward Inconveniencies that
 sometimes it exposes us to, without regarding
 what there is in Religion, sufficiently to bal-
 lance all these; 'tis not much to be admir'd,
 if corrupt Nature have a strong Aversion to it.
 But if we will take a View of Religion, and
 consider it seriously, in that Light wherein
 the Spirit of God represents it to us in Scrip-
 ture, we will see it the most desirable Thing
 imaginable. *Moses* had a right Taste of Re-
 ligion, and a just Notion of it, when he refus- ^{Heb. 11.}
 ed to be called the Son of *Pharaoh's* Daughter; ^{24, 26.}
choosing rather to suffer Affliction with the People
of God, than to enjoy the Pleasures of Sin for a
Season: Esteeming the Reproach of Christ greater
Riches than the Treasures of Egypt: For he had
Respect unto the recompence of Reward. Suppose
 there were no more to be said in Commenda-
 tion of Religion, than what we are assured of
 in the Text, methinks it is enough to oblige
 us all to the Study and Practice of it: For the
 Lord has set apart him that is godly for himself:

That *David* was the Penman of this ex-
 cellent *Psalms*, there is not the least Room to
 doubt, since the Title of it positively affirms
 so much; for it is called *A Psalm of David*;
 and is by him directed to the Chief Musician
 on *Neginoth*; that is, on stringed Instruments,
 which were play'd on by the Hand. The
 Title of it doth not tell us, as that of the *Psalms*
 immediately preceeding, did, that 'twas pen-
 ned

ned on any particular Occasions. Tho' some of the *Psalms* were indeed occasional, yet they were not all so: Many of them were designed for the general Instruction of God's People, that attended in the Courts of God's House; for assisting their Devotion, and directing their Conversation.

In the *first Verse* of this *Psalms*, the inspired Penman directs his Discourse to God by Prayer; taking his Encouragement both from his Consciousness of the Justice of his Cause, and the Experience he had of God's Grace and Goodness in former Times. And in the *Second Verse* he addresses himself to his Enemies, with whom he expostulates upon a twofold Account. *First*, for turning his Glory to Shame; which may be understood of their traducing his Innocence: Or rather of their putting Disgrace upon that Character and Honour which God had dignified him with, in anointing him King of Israel. His Enemies endeavour'd to expose him as one that had ambitiously and traiterously sought to wrest the Crown from his lawful Sovereign; thinking, by this Means, to make the People look upon him as a Rebel and an Usurper. *Secondly*, He tells them that by all their Attempts against him, they were but putting a Cheat upon themselves: For they were loving Vanity, and seeking after Leafings. And then he subjoins, in the Words of my Text; *But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself: The Lord will hear when I call unto him.*

In which Words you may observe these three Things, (1.) This holy Man's absolute

lute Safety, notwithstanding the utmost Attempts of his Enemies: *The Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself.* 'Tis generally supposed by Interpreters, that David speaks here of his own Designation to the Throne: He is that godly Man whom the Lord had set apart for that Honour; and therefore he did not usurp and assume it to himself: So that their Opposition to him must needs have been very criminal and provoking to God; because therein they were indeed fighting against God, as much as against him. Yet withal, you see this is express'd indefinitely, *The Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself.* That is, he hath set apart every particular godly Man for himself, in his eternal Election, in his effectual Calling, in the special Disposals of his Providence, and in the special Operations of his Grace. The Godly are a peculiar People unto God. (2) The undoubted Certainty of this, *But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself.* This seems to have a double Respect, as being spoke to two different Sorts of People. Let wicked People know and consider this, and let them take heed how they oppose or hurt any of God's special Ones; for their Redeemer is strong, and will espouse their Cause. And let the Godly know it for their Comfort and Caution: Let the Thoughts of God's having set them apart for himself, comfort them in all their Tribulations; and let them take heed they do not alienate themselves from him, to whom they are thus appropriated. (3) The Inference David draws from the two former Heads, *The Lord will*
H bear.

hear me when I call unto him. The Meaning is, Whenever I complain to him of mine Enemies, he will be sure to hear me: He will be sure to take my Part, and to relieve me: When I call unto him for a Supply of any of my Wants, he will be sure to hear me graciously: When e're I call unto him for Comfort and Support under mine Afflictions, I know he will send me an Answer of Peace: Whenever I call unto him for Counsel and Conduct in my Difficulties, he will be sure to make my Way plain and easie to me: Or upon whatsoever other Occasion I shall call unto him, he will be sure to hear my Requests and answer them. What needs further Explication in the Words, I shall have Occasion to meet with it afterwards in the Sequel of my Discourse; which through the Divine Influence, I intend to prosecute in the following Method.

I. *I shall endeavour to describe the godly Man whom the Lord hath set apart for himself.*

II. *Enquire what it is for the Lord to set apart him that is godly for himself.*

III. *I shall give you the Import of this Phrase, The Lord will hear when I call unto him.*

IV. *Apply.*

I am in the first Place to describe the godly Man whom the Lord hath set apart for himself. And,

First, He is one that hath suitable Conceptions and Uptakings of God, and preserves upon his Soul a due Sense of his infinite Glory, and spotless and incomparable Perfections. We are not, we cannot be said

to be godly, unless we both acknowledge and believe God to be of infinite Power, Holiness, Wisdom, Justice, Goodness, Truth, and the like: Unless we consider him as the Fountain of all Goodness; infinitely exalted above all the Creatures in Heaven and in Earth, and above the Praises of Angels and Men: Unless we love and esteem him above all, and delight in him accordingly; chusing him for our Portion and Inheritance, and saying with the *Psalmist*, *Whom have I in Heaven but thee, and there is none upon Earth that I desire besides thee.* Psal: 73: 25.

Secondly, He is one that answers all God's glorious Perfections with suitable Affections. As for Example, God is every where present, and therefore the godly Man is on that realizeth his Presence, evermore looking upon God as always looking upon him, and narrowly observing all that he either does, says, or thinks. God knows all Things, and therefore the godly Man sets the Lord always before him, remembering that, tho' Sin be committed never so secretly, and tho' it be disguised never so artfully, he who seeth in Secret counts even all our secret Wanderings, notes them down in his Book of Remembrance; and will, one Day, bring them forth in Judgment against us, unless we sincerely repent of them. God is unchangeable, the same to Day, Yesterday and for ever: With him there is no Variableness nor Shadow of turning. And therefore the godly Man is one who is unchangeable in his Purposes, his Resolutions and Promises that are good: He is fix'd and constant in the Service of

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God:

God : He is *stedfast and unmoveable*, always *abounding in the Work of the Lord*, and he will be faithful to him even unto the Death. God is infinite in Power; and therefore the godly Man is one, who is careful not to offend him in any Thing; either by neglecting what God hath commanded, or doing what he hath forbidden; he depends on God for Strength to perform every Duty, to overcome every Temptation, to bear every Affliction, and to accomplish his whole Work and Warfare. God is infinite and glorious in Holiness; and therefore the godly Man

1 Pet. 1. 15. studies to be *holy in all Manner of Conversation*, as he who hath called him is *holy*: He is constantly and approbatively holy, doing all he can to engage others to the study of it; spreading his Holiness in his Family, among his Children and Servants, and among his Neighbours and Acquaintances. God is infinite in Justice, and therefore the godly Man learns to walk in the Fear of the Lord all the Day long; constantly watching against every Thing that may provoke him to Anger. God is infinite in Goodness and Mercy, and therefore the godly Man, who has daily and constant Experiences of his Kindness, learns to be thankful; and is careful not to abuse the Riches of the Divine Goodness, by turning his Grace into Wantonness: The Goodness of God leads him to Repentance, and 2 Cor. 5. 14. his Love constrains him to Obedience: *For the Love of Christ constraineth us*, (says the Apostle.) God is infinite in Truth and Faithfulness, and therefore the godly Man reckons the Promises of the Word his sure Inheritance,

tance, verily believing there will be a full Accomplishment of them in due Time, and that not so much as one Lot or Title of them shall fall to the Ground, but all shall be fulfilled, to his eternal Comfort and Happiness. The like may be said with Respect to the Rest of the Divine Perfections.

Thirdly, He is one that answers all God's Relations to his People by a faithful Performance of all those Duties, which these Relations command and oblige us to. As for Example, God is a Father to his People, adopting them to himself in Christ Jesus: And therefore the godly Man studies an exact Conformity to him: He studies to be *perfect as his heavenly Father is perfect*, to be *holy as he is holy*, and to be *pure even as he is pure*. He loves the Lord his God with all his Heart, and with all his Soul, and with all his Strength, and with all his Mind: And he loves his Law, his Day, his Courts, his Ordinances, his People, and whatsoever else hath any Relation to him. As his Father he hears him, he honours him, he obeys him, he fears him, he trusts in him, and refers all his Concerns to him. As his Father he learns of him, receives his Instructions from him, loves to converse with him, imitates him, and patiently submits to his fatherly Chastisements. God stands in the Relation of a Shepherd to his People. *The Lord is my Shepherd, I'll not want*; and therefore the godly Man hears his Voice, answers his Calls, and acquaints himself with his Voice, that he may distinguish it from the Voice of a Stranger: He follows God as his Shepherd, and if at any Time he step a-

Psal. 23.

1.

side, or go astray from him, he speedily and penitently returns to him again: He keeps by his Flocks, and delights in his Pasture. The Lord is a Counsellor to his People; and therefore the godly Man looks up to him for Counsel and Conduct in all his Concerns, especially these relating to his Soul. The Way to Heaven is so full of Difficulties, that no Man, even the most eminent Saint could make his Way good thither; but would wander in By-paths, if he should trust to his own Wisdom, or lean to his own Understanding. But I say the godly Man seeks Counsel from God, and he leads him through all his Difficulties, and makes his Way plain before him. And good Reason has he to trust in God for Direction; *For he guides his People by his Counsel, and afterward receives them to Glory.*

Psal. 73.
24.

Fourthly, The godly Man is one who always speaks of God with all possible Seriousness, Gravity and Reverence. For truly Men speak but profanely of him, when they speak with that careless Levity, which they use in discoursing of common Things. Whenever we speak of God, it should be after such a serious Manner; that they, to whom we speak, may perceive that our Hearts are possess'd with such a holy Dread of that great and fearful Name; that we really put more Difference between God and Man, than we do between the greatest Man on Earth, and the meanest Worm that crawls upon the Ground. The Name of God is a most sacred Thing, and should never be so much as mentioned by us, but with the most profound Reverence and Veneration. But what shall

shall I say of those, that scarce ever mention the holy Name of God, but in their profane and hellish Oaths? These are the very reverse of a godly Man: They are the Devil's Servants, who are doing his Work, and shall, ere long, have their eternal Abode with him, *in that Lake that burns with Fire and Brimstone for evermore.* And yet alas! there are many, into whose Company we cannot enter, but we shall be immediately saluted with a whole Volly of their execrable and dreadful Oaths; and which is strange, these will needs pretend to be Gentlemen of Sense and Breeding; ignorantly thinking they can't behave themselves as such, unless by pouring Contempt upon his blessed and holy Name, who, as he has differenced them from others, in giving them a larger Portion of the good Things of this Life, so his Justice and Omnipotence stand engaged to consign them over to a double Portion of the everlasting Torments of the Damned, for such a gross Abuse of his Kindness, and such manifest Contempt of his Authority as they are guilty of. This unthinking Herd of poor dull Animals, who will needs forsooth set up to be the only Wits and Virtuoso's of the Age, without the least Ground for a Pretension of this Nature; had they but common Sense, would be ashamed to be so criminally guilty of that which can be attended, neither with Profit nor Pleasure, and therefore is a most unexcusable Sin.

Fifthly, He is one who is sincere in the Profession and Confession of the Name and Truths of God; even in Times of the greatest Diff-

Mat. 10.
32, 33.

ficulty and Danger. Hence our blessed Lord has assur'd us, That *whosoever shall confess him before Men, him will he confess before his Father which is in Heaven; but whosoever shall deny him before Men, him will he deny before his heavenly Father.* There is a Generation of People among us, (and a sad Crew they are) that think Shame to be Religious: As if it were a Disparagement to them, and a lessening of their Character, to serve that God, to whom they are really indebted for all that they are, and for all that they have, and to mind the great Concerns of their Souls, and of Eternity. They look upon Religion to be a Thing below them; as if it belong'd only to the meanest Sort to mind Things that are sacred and serious: And thus *professing themselves to be wise, they become Fools*: And the veriest Fools in Nature they are. I wish they would rather think it a Disparagement to them (as undoubtedly it is) to serve the Devil and their Lusts: For these poor miserable Wretches really degrade themselves, and put themselves upon a Level with the Brute Creatures which are capable of no other Happiness, but what consists in the Gratification of their Appetites. To them I may apply the Words of the Apostle Jude; *These speak evil of those Things they know not, but what they know naturally as Brute Beasts, in these they corrupt themselves.* Or, to speak with the Apostle Peter: *But these as natural Brute Beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of Things they understand not, and shall utterly perish in their own Corruption; and shall receive the Reward of Unrighteousness, as they count it Pleasure to*

Jude. 10.

2. Pet. 2.

12.--19

riot in the Day Time: Spots they are, and Blemishes, sporting themselves with their own Deceivings, while they feast with you. Having Eyes full of Adultery, and that cannot cease from Sin; beguiling unstable Souls: An Heart have they exercised with covetous Practices; cursed Children. Which have forsaken the Right Way, and are gone astray, following the Way of Balaam the Son of Bezor, who loved the Wages of Unrighteousness, but was rebuked for his Iniquity, &c. These are Wells without Water, Clouds that are carried with a Tempest, to whom the Mist of Darkness is reserved for ever. For when they speak great swelling Words of Vanity, they allure through the Lusts of the Flesh, through much Wantonness, those that are clean escaped from them, who live in Error. While they Promise them Liberty, they themselves are the Servants of Corruption: For of whom a Man is overcome, of the same is he brought in Bondage.

Sixthly, The godly Man is one, that is still commending God, and his Service to others, and thankfully proclaiming all the Acts of God's Kindness and Goodness to him: For sure I am, they that have felt the Pleasures of Religion, and have tasted that the Lord is Gracious, will, as they have Opportunity, endeavour to bring others to a better Opinion; and a more just Thought of serious Religion. They will be often commending God as the best Master, and his Service as the best Employment they can be engaged in. The profane, unthinking, carnal World entertain very harsh, but withal very unjust Notions, especially of the serious Part of Religion; As if 'twere the effectual Way
to

to ruin their worldly Interests, and to rob them of all the Comforts of this present Life. But let us labour to undeceive them as to these Points, by letting them see, That *Great*, every Way, is the *Gain of Godliness*; and that there are really no such Pleasures to be had any where, as in the Service of God. You'll see what a lively, what an elegant and moving Description the *Spouse* gave of Christ to the *Daughters of Jerusalem*; that by this Means, they might be brought to entertain better Thoughts of him than they had: *My Beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand. His Head is as the most fine Gold, his Locks are bushy, and black as a Raven. His Eyes are as the Eyes of Doves by the Rivers of Waters, washed with Milk, and fitly set. His Cheeks are as Beds of Spices, as sweet Flowers: His Lips like Lillies, dropping sweet smelling Myrrh. His Hands are as Gold Rings set with the Beryl: His Belly is as bright Ivory overlaid with Sapphires. His Legs are as Pillars of Marble, set upon Sockets of fine Gold: His Countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the Cedars. His Mouth is most sweet: Yea he is altogether lovely. This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend. O Daughters of Jerusalem. And you likewise see what a blessed Influence this Description of Christ had upon them: Through the Blessing of God, it wrought in them an earnest Desire after Christ, and set them on to seek to be interested in him; and therefore they say to the*

Cant. 5. *Spouse? Whither is thy Beloved gone, O thou fairest among Women? Whither is thy Beloved turned aside, that we may seek him with thee?*

10—16.

Cant. 6. *The same was also David's Practice, Come and*

and hear, (says he) all ye that fear God, and *Psal. 66.*
I will declare what the Lord hath done for my ^{16.}
Soul.

Seventhly, He is one that hath a holy and blameless Conversation in the World: Without this we are absolute Strangers to Godliness, pretend what we will. What is a Profession of Religion, without a holy religious Life? 'Tis nothing but vile Hypocrisy: Or, what is it worth? Verily worth nothing at all: 'Tis a mocking of God, and a deceiving our selves. *Not every one that shall say unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but they that do the Will of my Father which is in Heaven,* says our blessed Saviour. *Mat. 7. 21.* Without Holiness, let us call our selves what we please, we are but abominable Hypocrites: And it deserveth our particular Consideration, how the Spirit of God in Scripture stigmatizeth the Sin of *Hypocrisy*, with the hateful Name of *Blasphemy*; and therefore it cannot but make those that are guilty of it obnoxious to a very dreadful Punishment. *I know the Blasphemy of them that say they are Jews, and are not; but are of the Synagogue of Satan.* God will utterly disown such. H'll disclaim all Interest in them, deem them to belong to the Devil, and condemn them to everlasting and devouring Flames. *Rev. 2. 9.*

I say, the godly Man is one who has a holy and unblameable Life in the World; *Herein* *Acts. 24.*
does he always exercise himself in keeping a Con- ^{16.}
science void of Offence towards God and towards Man. In every Thing he complies with the Will of God, and governs himself by the Rule of his Word: He yields to whatsoever God
wills

wills him, either to do or not to do; and he carefully endeavours to do whatsoever God Commands, in the same Manner, and with the same Spirit that he requires it to be done. He considers that as the Nature of God is the Patern, so his Will is the Rule of our Holiness: Every one of our Actions are either holy or unholy, according to their Conformity to, or Variation from the Will of God; and there is really no more Holiness, than there is of the Will of God in what we do. So that you see, to be holy, is to do the Will of God: For these two are reciprocal Terms.

Eightly, The godly Man is one that trusts all the Concerns, both of his Soul and Body unto God. There's a great deal of Religion in this, when we can fearlessly and quietly trust God with our whole Concerns; and think our selves safe under the Divine Conduct and Protection, even amidst the most threatening Dangers, that either Devils or wicked Men can cast in our Way. *David* exprets'd, I may say, the very Height of this holy Trust, when he said, *I will not be afraid of ten thousands of People that set themselves against me round about:* At this Time, it seems, *David's* Enemies were very numerous, and they were very spiteful; they were most diligent, watching every Opportunity against him; and they surrounded him on all Hands, thinking it utterly impossible for him to escape the Snares they had laid: Yet you see, in the midst of all these dangerous and threatening Circumstances, he was most fearless and easy; because he had committed himself, and his righteous Cause to him who is God Almighty, and God

Psal. 3. 6.

God All-sufficient; even to that God, who had hitherto helped him, and who, he knew, would bring all his present Troubles to a comfortable Issue.

Ninthly, He is one that patiently and thankfully submits to every Thing, that God, in his holy and wise Providence, thinks fit to carve out to him; never murmuring nor repining at any of the Divine Administrations, how cross soever they are to his own natural Inclination. He is content with that Lot, which his infinitely wise and gracious God thinks fit to allot him, tho' it be never so full of Crosses and Difficulties, verily believing that he shall meet with nothing, but what infinite Wisdom sees good and necessary for him, and which, he is sure, will turn to his Advantage. He is fully content and satisfied, that in all Respects, God treat him as he pleaseth, bearing patiently all the Afflictions and Crosses that at any Time befall him; whether they come immediately from the Hand of God, or from the Hand of Man; and whether they are upon his outward or inward Man, whether they be upon his Person, or upon his good Name, or upon his Relations, or upon his Estate: He takes all in good Part that God thinks fit to lay upon him, accepting of all Crosses as the necessary Discipline of God's House. When God thinks fit to deprive him of any of his earthly Comforts, he Job 1. 21. has learned to say with Job, *The Lord gave, and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the Name of the Lord.* Herein lies a very considerable Part of serious Religion, when we are fully
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content that God treat us in all Respects, and dispose of us, and of all our Concerns as he thinks fit.

1 Pet. 4.
10, 11.

Tenthly, The godly Man is one that faithfully lays out all his Talents for God. The Apostle Peter has a Word full to this Purpose, for among other Rules of Life, he lays down to us, this is one. *As every Man hath received the Gift, even so let him minister the same one to another; as good Stewards of the manifold Grace of God. If any Man speak, let him speak as the Oracles of God; if any Man minister, let him do it as of the Ability which God giveth, that God in all Things may be glorified, through Jesus Christ.* Every godly Man considers, that whatsoever Gifts or Talents God has bestowed upon him: His End in bestowing them is, that he may faithfully occupy them for him until he require him to give an Account of his Stewardship. But there is a Generation of People in the World, who grossly abuse the good Talents that God has bestowed upon them, to his Dishonour; using them only to encourage and harden themselves and others in Wickedness: These are not only absolute Strangers to God and to Godliness, but Enemies to both: And a fearful Reckoning they will have to make, if they continue thus to abuse the Riches of the Divine Goodness, and, as 'twere, fight against God with his own Weapons. For if the *unprofitable Servant*, that only hid his Master's Talent in the Earth, without abusing it, at least that we read of, *was cast into utter Darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of Teeth*; how fearful will the Doom of

Matt. 25.
30.

of such be, who are guilty of so gross an Abuse? And if he that is not with Christ sha'l be constructed to be against him, how much more he, whose Life is a constant and actual Rebellion against the most High God?

Eleventhly, He is one that sets himself in a stated and constant Opposition against Sin. Herein lies a very considerable Part of Godliness; and therefore I shall consider it more particularly, and shew you, in sundry Particulars, the Difference between the godly Man's, and the Hypocrite's, Opposition to Sin. And,

(1.) The godly Man's Opposition to Sin is universal: He not only opposes this, or that, or the other Sin, but every Sin, whether it be a Sin in the Heart, or in the Tongue, or in the Life: Under whatsoever Shapes Sin appears, the godly Man sets himself against it: *Hypocrites* are not so: For their only Design being, to keep up a Name and Shew of Religion in the World, they trouble themselves no further, than to have their Life free from gross and scandalous Sins; but it never disturbs them, how vile and filthy soever their Hearts are: Nor are they at any Pains to cleanse themselves from all Filthiness of the Flesh ² Cor. 7. and Spirit; that they may perfect Holiness in ¹. the Fear of God. On the other Hand, the godly Man's chief Care is, to have his Heart right with God: Neither is he so solicitous to appear religious, as really to be so.

(2.) The godly Man opposes, and studies to conquer every Degree of Sin; the least and lowest, as well as the highest; well knowing that lower Degrees of Sin, if Men indulge them-

themselves in them, will insensibly lead them to the highest Degrees of it. But *Hypocrites*, tho' perhaps they will not venture upon the highest Degrees of any open Sin, I mean, such Sins as ly obvious to the View of the World; yet they scruple not to allow themselves in some of the lesser, and lower Degrees of Sin; and they can, without Remorse, venture upon that which commonly ushers in the most vile and scandalous Sins.

(3.) The godly Man opposes and restrains himself, not only from the Custom, and Habit of every Sin: but he keeps himself, as much as possible from every Act of Sin: and is so far from allowing or indulging himself in it, that he strenuously opposes every Temptation that's cast in his Way. He knows, if he suffer himself tamely to be led away by a Temptation to any Sin, he's in great Danger to be tempted frequently to commit the same Sin; and in no less Danger of being overcome by these Temptations, and so, of contracting a Habit of Sinning. But as for *Hypocrites*, they think it sufficient, if they do not habituate themselves, and are quite enslav'd to any Lust, tho' they sometimes indulge themselves in it.

(4.) Every godly Man is careful to shun whatsoever has but the least Shew or Semblance of Sin; in this punctually observing the Advice given us by the Apostle *Paul*, when
 1 Thes. 5. he directs us to *abstain from all Appearance*
 22. *of Evil*. If any Thing appear unto us to be sinful, or if we are but apprehensive or jealous that the same is a Sin, whether it be really so or not, it certainly becomes a Sin to us,

us, if we commit it; because, as the same Apostle observes, *whatsoever is not of Faith is Sin.* And again, he assures us, that *he who doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of Faith.* But the Hypocrite does not stand in Awe to commit many Things which he is not certain but they are Sins.

(5.) The godly Man carefully avoids every Thing which he apprehends may be an Occasion of Sin to him, and keeps as far out of the Way of Temptations as he can: For he is sensible, that altho' he is sanctify'd, he is but sanctify'd in Part, and still carries the Seeds of Corruption in his Nature: He has the Feuel of Lust in his Heart, which the least Spark of a Temptation is apt to kindle into a Flame, if he does not look well to himself: And therefore, I say, he carefully endeavours to keep himself at a Distance from Temptations. Whereas *Hypocrites*, being too confident of their own Strength, foolishly throw themselves in the Way of that, which through the Subtility of Satan, and the Treachery of their own wicked and deceitful Hearts, proves a Snare to them; in this acting quite contrary to the Advice Solomon gives us, when he says, *Enter not into the Path of the wicked, and go not in the Way of evil Men: Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.* Prov. 4¹⁴

(6.) The godly Man, in a special Manner, opposes, and sets himself against the Sin that more easily besets him. The holiest Man on Earth, tho' he is not indeed under the Power and Dominion of Sin, nor in the Gall of Bitterness, and Bond of Iniquity; yet there is
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some one Sin or other, which his Nature and Constitution prompts him more to, and which he is more easily enticed to commit, than others: This he chiefly opposes, and watches against. Hence you'll find *David* bringing it in, as an Evidence of his Sincerity in Religion, that *he kept himself from his Iniquity*. Whereas an *Hypocrite* will avoid any Sin more, than *the Sin that easily besets him*; and he can far more easily be perswaded to forsake all his other Sins than to part with his beloved Lust: Nor can he be induc'd to pluck out his right Eye, and cut off his right Hand, tho' the Scripture assures him he cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven unless he do so.

Psal. 18.
23.

Matth. 5.
29. 30.

Psal. 51.
4.

(7.) Every Godly Man hates and opposes Sin, chiefly because of its Contrariety to the pure and holy Nature of God, and because it is so displeasing and dishonouring to him. The godly Man opposes Sin, because 'tis really a Wrong done to God, and a Despising of his Authority: And this is indeed true Religion and Godliness. Hear what *David* says, when he speaks of his Sins of *Murder* and *Adultery*: *Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this Evil*. Tho' by these two hainous Sins, he had really done a great Injury to *Uriah* and *Bathsheba*, and likewise brought no little Slurr upon his own good Name; yet he grieved not so much for his Guilt upon these Accounts, as because 'twas a Dishonour to God, a Reproach to Religion, and gave Occasion to the Enemy to blaspheme. 'Tis nothing but vile Hypocrisy, to oppose Sin only, or yet chiefly, because

cause it exposes us to Shame and Disgrace in the World, or because 'twill bring us to suffer condign Punishment from Men, or the like.

(8.) The godly Man, in his Opposition to Sin, aims at nothing less than the utter Ruin and Destruction of Sin. Tho' he should give Sin never so many and deep Wounds; he is not, he cannot be satisfied, unless he has quite ruin'd and undone it, endeavouring to free himself from the very In-being of Sin, as far as 'tis possible for him to do in this State of Imperfection; earnestly crying out with the Apostle Paul, *O wretched Man that I am, who shall deliver me from the Body of this Sin and Death?* But as for Hypocrites, they oppose Sin no further than is necessary to keep up a Decorum among their Neighbours.

Rom. 7.
24.

Twelfthly, The godly Man is one that constantly and conscientiously performs every religious Duty. He neglects none of them, whether publick, private, or secret: He is one that attends punctually upon Ordinances, neither does he neglect Family Religion; and he takes no small Pleasure in Conversing with God in secret Devotion. He has a right End in every religious Exercise: He does not pray, nor fast, nor wait upon God in other Duties, *to be seen of Men*, or to gain the Applause of the World, as the Scribes and Pharisees did. They that do so, God will throw back the Dung of their Sacrifice upon their Faces. But the godly Man's principal End in all religious Exercises is, to advance the Glory of God, to express his Homage to him, to own his Dependance on him; and to maintain and increase his Communion and

Matth. 6.
5.

- Acquaintance with him. He is spiritual in every religious Duty, studying to have his Heart right with God; and he is, as the Apostle Paul directs, *Fervent in Spirit serving the Lord*. He is punctual and constant in the Performance of every religious Duty: For no worldly Business will divert him from his Duty to his God. And truly, if we will allow any Thing to excuse us from our Duty, to be sure, Satan will always furnish us with some one Excuse or other. No contrary Commands of Men will restrain him from his Duty to God; for he obeys God rather than all Men. No outward Advantage is able to bribe him out of his Duty: For he knows *tho' he should gain the whole World, if he lose his Soul, he is profited nothing*: Nay his Loss will be irreparable. No outward Disadvantage will be able to frighten him from his Duty; but with *Daniel*, he will not neglect Prayer, tho' he should be *cast into the Lions Den*. The Stream of the Multitude will not carry him away from his Duty; but tho' all the World should walk contrary to God, yet he resolves with holy *Joshua*, *As for me and my House, we will serve the Lord*. He dares not venture upon the Performance of any religious Duty in his own Strength, but does all in the Name, and in the Strength of his God. Tho' *David* was a Man after God's own Heart, and one of the most eminent Saints in his Day, yet he durst not go about any Duty without first calling in the Aids and Influences of Grace: *Psalm 119. Quicken thou me according to thy Word*. He is humble under all his Attainments and Performances. They that are puffed up with Pride and

and Self-conceit, because of their Performances, are sure to fall into the Snare of the Devil, which Humility and Lowly-mindedness will prevent. When we have done all we can, we must both say and think, we are *but unprofitable Servants*, and come far thort of what we ought to be, and of what we ought to do. Any Measure of Seriousness and Fervency in the Performance of religious Duties we attain to, let us acknowledge that 'tis owing wholly to the Influences of Grace, and not at all to our selves: *Psal. 115.* And therefore let us say with the Psalmist, *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy Name give the Glory, for thy Mercy and for thy Truths sake.*

Lastly, The godly Man is one that has his Mind rightly employ'd even in the Exercise of his worldly Calling. He dares not leave his Religion in the Church, nor in his Closet, but carries it about with him whithersoever he goes; and discovers something of it in every Thing he puts his Hand to. Now the Way how the godly Man is exercited with Reference to his worldly Calling is,

(1.) By being diligent in his Calling: For Religion is not at all consistent with Idleness. Nay he is not only diligent in his Calling, but diligent in it for Conscience sake. Some People can bestow a great Deal of Labour and Diligence in their worldly Callings; but then 'tis only their Covetousness, and Worldly-mindedness that prompts them to it, and not the Command of God, which obliges us to be *not slothful in Business; to know the* *Rom. 12.* *State of our Flocks, and to look well to our Herds.* *11.* *Prov. 27.*

(2.) By trusting, not so much to his own Skill and Industry, as to the Blessing of God, for Success and Thriving in his Calling. How many People are there that, when Things go well with them in the World, impute all to their own Care and Management? And so they take that Praise to themselves, which belongs to God alone. But a godly Man acknowledges God in all his Ways. Thus holy *Jacob* had got Abundance of Riches, and tho' he was very industrious in his Calling, yet he ascribed all to the Blessing of God. *I am not worthy* (says he) *of the least of all the Mercies, and of all the Truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy Servant: For with this Staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two Bands.* And you'll see how the Lord cautions the *Israelites* to this Purpose; that when their Herds and Flocks, their Silver and Gold, were multiplied: *Beware* (says he) *that thou say not in thine Heart, My Power, and the might of my Hand hath gotten me this Wealth: But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God, for it is he that giveth thee Power to get Wealth, that he might establish his Covenant, which he sware unto thy Fathers, as it is this Day.*

Gen. 32.
10.

Deut. 8.
18.

Phil. 4.
11, 12.

(3.) By being content with his Lot, whether Providence make him thrive, or keep him low, as to his worldly Circumstances. *Paul* learned this Lesson exactly well. *I have learned* (says he) *in whatsoever State I am, therewith to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound: Every where, and in all Things I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry; both to abound, and to suffer need.* We very much offend God, when we are dissatisfied with

with any of his Providences towards us: But O! How happy would we be, if we could look upon every Disappointment we meet with in our worldly Concerns, to be what God sees good for us? This would sweeten every Lot to us, and turn our Crosses into real Blessings. But when we fret and vex our selves, because every Thing falls not out exactly according to our Mind; this adds to our Affliction, and truly lays a Load upon a Burden.

(4.) By taking Care that his Diligence and Industry in the Exercise of his worldly Calling, does not rob God of that Time, which should be spent in his Service; and that it do not blunt the Edge of his Spirit, and indispose him for the Duties of God's Worship: *Will a Man rob God? yet ye have robbed me; Mal. 3. 8, but ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In Tithes and Offerings. Ye are cursed with a Curse, for ye have robbed me, even this whole Nation.* Many People are so anxious and concerned about their worldly Callings, that they neglect their Christian Calling: And they are so busie in making Provision for their Bodies, that they really starve their Souls, and make no Provision for Eternity. But, *my Brethren*, these Things ought not to be so: For every Man's chief Care should be about his Soul; and this he may well do, without neglecting the Concerns of this present Life.

(5.) By being spiritual in the Exercise of his worldly Calling: Doubtless there is a Way to spiritualize every Thing we put our Hands to: And it were good for People, when they are about their worldly Employments,

Matth.
16. 26.

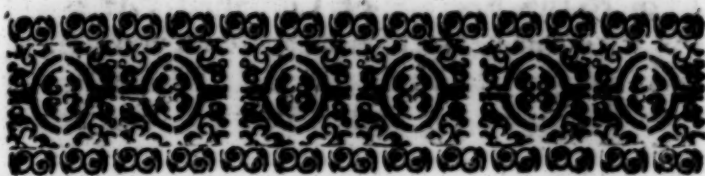
1 Tim.
6. 7.

Job 1. 21.

2 Pet. 2.
8.

to meditate frequently, and with much Seriousness, on the Vanity of the World, and the Unprofitableness of earthly Things to their Souls: For the whole World is not able to balance the Loss of the Soul; *For what shall a Man give in Exchange for his Soul?* 'Twere good also for you to be often remembering, that the Time will come, when ye shall bid an eternal Adieu to all your Creature-Comforts: For (as the Apostle assures us) *we brought nothing into the World with us, and it is certain, we can carry nothing out of it.* And what Job says, the same may every Man say; *Naked came I out of my Mother's Womb, and naked shall I return thither.* I observed to you before, if People are rightly exercised, they may spiritualize every Thing. Thus the Husbandman may turn his Barn and his Fields, the Merchant his Shop, and the Mechanick his Work-house, into a Cloister, by making spiritual Reflexions upon every Thing he either handles or fixes his Eye upon. To encourage you in which, I shall allude to those Words of the Apostle Peter, tho' spoken upon another Occasion. *For if these Things be in you, and abound, they may make you that ye shall neither be barren, nor unfruitful in the Knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.* To whom with the Father and the blessed Spirit, one God, be immortal Honour and Praises. Amen.





SERMON VI.

The godly Man's Privilege and Happiness.

PSAL. iv. 3.

*But know that the Lord hath set apart
him that is godly for himself: The
Lord will hear when I call unto him,*

WERE the Scriptures better be-
lieved in the World, there would
not be so much Atheism and Ir-
religion among Men as there is.

*The Wrath of God is indeed revealed from Hea-
ven against all Unrighteousness and Ungodliness of
Men: But if People will not believe what the
God of Truth hath said, and what he hath
threatned, neither the Precepts, nor Promises,
nor Threatnings can have any suitable Influe-
nce upon them. My Text, if really believ'd
and*

and consider'd, is sufficient to engage every Man to the Exercise of Godliness, If you'll but state the Matter impartially to your selves, and weigh Things in an even Balance, and then determine for that which you find really good; you will never choose any other Way but the Way of Godliness: In this Case you would quickly resolve upon a Course of serious Religion, not merely because you know no other Course you can follow, but because truly, upon a diligent Search, you can find none so good. Religion hath so much self-evident Reason and Righteousness on its Side, that it may be safely referred to every Man, that allows himself a serious Thought, whether he will chuse, or whether he will refuse it: For the Merits of the Cause are so plain, that no considering Person can do otherwise than to embrace it. The Case is so clear, that it determines it self.

Having already given you the Character of the godly Man, whom the Lord hath set apart for himself, by which you may plainly see wherein true Godliness and Religion lies: I shall next proceed to consider, *What it is for the Lord to set apart him that is godly for himself.* And,

Psal. 16.
3.

First, It implies the special Esteem that God has for the godly Man above all others in the World. Hence in Scripture the Godly are called *the excellent Ones in the Earth.* Tho' many of them are poor, mean, and despicable as to their outward Circumstances, yet they are really more excellent than the greatest Princes on Earth that are profane: God hath made them so by the Grace he hath

hath bestowed upon them. In this Sense Solomon tells us, *The Righteous is more excellent* Prov. 12. *than his Neighbour*. Some read it, *He is more* 26. *abundant; or rich than his Neighbour*: He is richer than his Neighbour, tho' perhaps not in this World's Goods; yet he is so in the Graces and Comforts of the Spirit of God, which are the true Riches. There is an Excellency in Religion that enobles Men, and makes them truly valuable: And this is an Excellency, which, in the Sight of God, is of great Price, who is the only Judge of true Excellency. The righteous Man's Neighbour may, perhaps, make a greater Figure in the World, and be more applauded, than he: But the godly Man has such an intrinsick Worth, as makes him far more excellent in God's Esteem. The Godly are likewise in Scripture called *God's Jewels*, to denote his special Esteem of them: *And they shall be mine, saith* Mal. 3. 17. *the Lord of Hosts, in the Day when I make up my Jewels*. The Saints are dear to God, and he is pleased to glory in them. They are a Royal Diadem in his Hand, and he looks upon them as his Treasure, which he will take a special Care of. The Rest of the World are but Lumber in Respect of them. Hence also the Lord is said to have *chosen Jacob for himself, and* Psal. 135. *Israel for his peculiar Treasure*. Not that God 4. can be enriched by them. No, *Our Goodness extendeth not unto him, nor can any Man be profitable to the Almighty*; but only to express the particular Esteem he had of them, and his special Care of them.

Secondly, It implies God's special Love and Affection to them, above what he bears to other

Isaiah 54.
5, 7, 8, 10.

other Men: He remembers them with the Love he bears to his chosen Ones. This naturally follows upon the former: For if God has a special Esteem for the godly Man, he must needs also have a special Love to him. Hence he is said to be the *Husband* of his People: For thy *Maker is thine Husband, the Lord of Hosts is his Name, and thy Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel: The God of the whole Earth shall he be called. For a small Moment have I forsaken thee, but with great Mercies will I gather thee. In a little Wrath I hid my Face from thee, for a Moment; but with everlasting Kindness will I have Mercy on thee: For the Mountains shall depart, and the Hills be removed, but my Kindness shall not depart from thee; neither shall the Covenant of my Peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath Mercy on thee.* As the Husband is bound, both by the Ties of Nature, and the Laws of Religion, to have a more affectionate Love to his Wife, than to any other: So hath the Lord a more special and affectionate Love to the Godly, than he has to all the World besides. He has engraven them upon the Palms of his Hands, nay upon the Table of his Heart: So that they shall not be forgotten by him, World without End. 'Twas the Psalmist's Prayer, That God might remember him with the Favour he bears to his own People. There are a People in the World, that are, in a special Manner, the People of God; and these are the Godly: And there is a special Love and Favour that he bears to them, which none but they have an Interest in; neither doth a Stranger intermeddle with their Joy. Know then that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for

for himself, to be the happy Object of his special Favour, and to enjoy the pleasing and saving Discoveries of his Love. God has indeed a Love of Benevolence to all Mankind in general, as they are his Creatures; but he has a special Love to the Godly, and they are his particular Favourites. And therefore he is said to manifest himself to them in *another Manner, than he does to the Rest of the World.* And besides all the special Favours they receive from him now, *Eye hath not seen, nor hath Ear heard, neither hath it enter'd into the Heart of Man to conceive, what he hath laid up for them in the Life to come.* John 14. 22.

Thirdly, It implies, the special Delight and Satisfaction that God takes in the godly Man. There is something more in this than in the two foregoing Heads: For to delight in a Man is more than to esteem and love him: It denotes the Height of Favour and Kindness. Hence the Godly of the Houses of Israel and Judah are said to be his Vineyard, and his pleasant Plant. *For the Vineyard of the Lord of Hosts, is the House of Israel, and the Men of Judah his pleasant Plant.* That is, the Plants of his Pleasure, which he is pleased in, and delighted to do good to. And he is said to *take pleasure in his People:* He takes a Pleasure in their Services, in their Prosperity, in Communion and Converse with them, and in making Discoveries of his Favour to them. He is infinitely happy in the Enjoyment of himself: Neither can there be any Addition made to his essential Felicity: Yet he graciously condescends to take Pleasure in his People. See how the Scripture expresses this

Isaiah 62. 4. this Pleasure, Thou shalt no more be called forsaken, neither shall thy Land be any more termed desolate; but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy Land Beulah: For the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy Land shall be married. Thou shalt be called Hephziba, that is, my Delight or Pleasure is in her. Three Things make it appear that God can't but take Delight in the godly Man.

(1.) Because he bears the very Image of
2 Cor. 3. 18. God: But we all with open Face, beholding, as in a Glass, the Glory of the Lord, (says the Apostle) are changed into the same Image, from Glory to Glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. Now certainly God cannot but be delighted in them that bear his Image: And the more godly we are, so much the more are we like God; and consequently, he takes the more Delight in us.

(2.) As the godly Man bears the Image of God, so this Image is the Workmanship of God in him; according to that of the A-
Ephes. 2. 10. postle, For we are his Workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good Works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them. The godly Man is not only God's Workmanship, in a natural Capacity, as he is a Man, and in a civil Capacity, as he is such and such a Man. High or Low, Rich or Poor, Noble or Ignoble, and the like: But also in his spiritual Capacity, as he is a Saint. And is it possible that he should not have Pleasure in his own Works? Moses tells us, that when he looked upon all the outward Work which he had made; He saw them, and behold they were very good. And if he took Pleasure in
the

Gen. 1. 31.

the Structure and Fabrick of the Universe, which was the first Creation; how much more shall he take Pleasure in that Holiness, which, by his Spirit, he hath wrought in the Souls of his People, which is his second Creation? And a more noble and curious Structure this is than the visible Creation: The new Creation I say, is more glorious and excellent than the old; and therefore God can't but take Delight in the godly Man, as he is his new Creature.

(3.) Because the godly Man has in his Soul the very Form (if I may be allow'd the Expression) of the revealed Will of God: For our Holiness lies in our Conformity to the Will, as well as to the Nature of God. Now God cannot but delight in them that are conform'd to his Will; that is, that are faithfully and conscientiously endeavouring to conform their Lives to the Rule of his holy Word. I remember *Samuel* says to *Saul*, *Hath* 1 Sam. 15.
the Lord as great Delight in Burnt-Offerings 22.
and Sacrifices, as in obeying the Voice of the Lord?
 Surely not. Every Man, you know, takes Pleasure in having his Will fulfilled, tho' our Will be but a corrupt and sinful Will: And it cannot but be a Pleasure to God, when his holy Will is fulfilled; *When his Will is done on Earth as it is done in Heaven.*

Fourthly, The Lord's setting apart him that is Godly for himself implies, his interesting himself in all the *Concerns* of the godly Man. And because this deserves our particular Consideration, I beg Leave to branch it out into these three Heads.

(1.) God Interests himself in all the *Affi-*
Et 19ms

Pfal. 34. 19. *Etions of the godly Man. Many indeed are the Afflictions of the godly Man; but whatever Calamities he meets with, God takes Part, and sympathizes with him in them. You have a very memorable Passage to this Purpose in the Writings of the Prophet Isaiah,*

Isaia. 63. 9. *In all their Afflictions he was afflicted, and the Angel of his Presence saved them. What is the eternal Mind capable of Grieving? Or is his infinite Justice capable of Suffering? No such Thing: but by this Expression, he is pleased to set forth the special Love he hath to his People, and the particular Concern he has for them in all their Afflictions and Trials. Thus far he sympathizes with them, that he takes what Injuries are done to them as done to himself, and will reckon with their Enemies accordingly. The Cries of the Godly move God to Compassion towards them, and make him many Times move so quickly for their Reliet, as if he were indeed pain'd in their Pain, and felt the Smart of their Troubles. When Saul, who was after called Paul, was going on in his full Career, breathing out nothing but Blood and Slaughter against the Members of Christ, God stopt him by an immediate Voice from Heaven, saying, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And when he had said, who art thou Lord? The Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: It is hard for thee to kick against the Pricks. He thought he was only persecuting a Company of poor, weak, silly People, that were an Offence and Eye-sore to the Pharisees, not at all imagining, there was one in Heaven, whom he was all the while insulting. God takes what is done*

Acts 9. 5, 6.

done against any of his People, as done against himself, and will both judge and punish their Adversaries accordingly.

You have a Word in one of the Prophets full to this Purpose: And it at once speaks forth a great deal of Comfort and Safety to the Godly, and no less Terror to their Enemies and Persecutors. *For he that toucheth you, Zech. 2. toucheth the Apple of his Eye.* You see here 8. how God interests himself in all the Afflictions of his People, and takes that which is done against them, as not only done immediately against himself, but *against the Apple of his Eye*, which, you know, is the most tender and sensible Part of the Body, and which the least Touch will occasion Pain to. Whosoever doth an Injury to one of the least of the Godly, they touch God, (if I may so speak) in a very sensible Part; and in the Issue they will find, they have really done the greatest Injury to themselves. The godly Man needs not wish the evil Day to any that injure him; he may leave it to him who has said, *Vengeance is mine, I will repay.* Who- Rom. 12. soever opposes or persecutes a godly Man, 19. 'twere better for him *that a Mill-stone were hanged about his Neck, and he cast into the Depths of the Sea*: For sooner or later he shall pay dear for it. *God will suffer no Man to do them Harm*: Nay, he has many Times (as the Psalmist observes) *reproved Kings for their Sakes, saying touch not mine anointed, and do my Prophets no Harm.* God will be sure, one Time or other, to reckon with the greatest on Earth, for the Injuries they have done to

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any

any of his People ; and they may expect to hear of it one Way or other.

- (2.) He interests himself in the *Provision* of the Godly. Again there are two Things that he concerns himself in as to this, (1.) He will be sure to give them what Provision of the good Things of this Life he sees best for them: He feeds them with Food convenient for them, and he cloaths them with Raiment meet for them ; and what can they desire more. Hence our Saviour directs us to take no Thought, saying, *what shall we eat? Or, what shall we drink? Or, wherewithal shall we be clothed? &c.* For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these Things. And consequently, he will furnish you with them. He does not indeed feed all the Godly with the finest of the Wheat ; I mean, he does not bestow on them the choicest of earthly Comforts : Some of them have but coarse Fare, and a scanty Provision, while wicked Men have Abundance. *Lazarus lay at the Gate of the Rich Glutton, who fared sumptuously every Day, and would have been glad of the Crumbs that fell from his Table.* But what is necessary for them, they shall be sure of: *Their Bread shall be given them, and their Water shall be made sure.* (2) He will bless their Provision to them: *And the Blessing of the Lord it maketh rich, and he addeth no Sorrow with it.* God's Blessing will make a small Thing go a great Way. For 'tis far better to have a Morsel of Bread, and a Cup of Water, and the Blessing of God with it, than to have the best Fare, and the greatest Abundance without his Blessing. 'Twas this Consideration I suppose made

Matt. 6.
31, 32.

Luke 16.
19.

Isaiah 33.
15, 16.

Prov. 10.
22.

made holy *David* prefer even the Penury of a godly Man to the Plenty of many wicked Men. *A little* (says he) *that a righteous Man* ^{Psal. 37.} *hath, is better than the Riches of many Wicked.* ^{16.}

A godly Man's Estate, tho' never so small, is really better, and more valuable than a wicked Man's, tho' never so large: For it comes from a better Hand, even from a Hand of special Love, and not from a Hand of common Providence only. 'Tis enjoy'd by a better Title; for God gives it him by Promise: 'Tis his, by Vertue of his Relation to Christ, and he puts it to a far better Use: 'Tis sanctified to him by the Grace and Blessing of God. By Vertue of which Blessing the godly Man finds more Comfort in his earthly Enjoyments than wicked and sensual Men are capable to find in theirs.

(3.) God likewise interests himself in the Posterity of the Godly: He not only takes Care of *them* but of *their*. He has promised to shew Mercy unto Thousands of Generations of *them* ^{Exod. 20} *that love him and keep his Commandments.* As ⁶ he loves the godly Man with an everlasting Love, so he will not cut off his loving Kindness from his Posterity: *The Lord will bless* ^{Psal. 115.} *you more and more; you and your Children.* There ^{14.} is a Blessing entail'd upon the Seed of the Godly: *For his Seed shall be powerful on the* ^{Psal. 112.} *Earth; the Generation of the Upright shall be* ^{2.} *blessed.* Religion has raised many a Family, and has founded them more firmly, than all the carnal Policy in the World could have done. When the Godly are triumphant in Heaven, their Posterity are many Times powerful on the Earth, and make a consider-

Ea. 14. 20.

Psal. 37.
25.Psal. 92.
12.--14.

able Figure among their Neighbours; even perhaps a better Figure than the Posterity of the Wicked: For *the Seed of Evil-doers shall never be renown'd. David* was a most exact and critical Observer of the Methods of Divine Providence, especially with Respect to the Godly; and yet he protests, that in all his Observation, he had never seen one righteous Man forsaken of God, nor his Posterity begging. *I have been young, and now am old, yet have I never seen the Righteous forsaken, nor his Seed begging their Bread.* The Prophet speaks not here of a Thing that cannot possibly be, but of that which is very seldom; even to very very rare, that, for his Part, he had never so much as seen one single Instance of it.

And if God thus far interests himself in the temporal Concerns of the godly Man, doubtless he will much more interest himself in his spiritual Concerns. If he interest himself in his smallest and minutest Concerns, certainly he will much more do it as to his greatest Concerns, the Concerns of his Soul. See how elegantly the Divine Psalmist descants upon this Subject in the following Words. *The Righteous shall flourish like the Palm Tree: He shall grow like a Cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the House of the Lord, shall flourish in the Courts of our God. They shall still bring forth Fruit in old Age: They shall be fat, and flourishing.* All which must be understood of his Soul's thriving.

Fifthly, It implies their being set apart for great and noble Ends and Uses; two of which I shall only name here.

(1.)

(1.) He has set them apart, that they may distinguish themselves from others, by the Holiness of their Lives. See what our blessed Lord says to this Purpose: *Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, that ye should go and bring forth Fruit, and that your Fruit should remain.* Joh. 15. 16. Has God bestowed his Grace upon you? Has he given you such a distinguishing Mark of his Love? Sure his Design never was that ye should suffer his Grace to lie dormant in your Souls, but that you should go and bring forth Abundance of the *Fruits of Holiness*; that you should be fruitful in every good Word and Work. And has he not elsewhere charg'd us, *to have our Light so shining before Men, that they seeing our good Works, may glorify our Father which is in Heaven.* Matth. 5. 16. Much to the same Purpose speaks the Apostle Paul in one of his Epistles: *According as he hath chosen us in him (meaning Christ) before the Foundation of the World, that we should be holy, and without Blame before him in Love.* Eph. 1. 4 One great End of God's electing Love, is, that we should be holy: He did not make Choice of any, because he foresaw they would be holy, but because he determin'd to make them so. All that are set apart for Happiness as the End, are set apart for Holiness as the Mean leading to it. Their Sanctification, as well as Salvation, is the Result of the Counsels of Divine Love and Wisdom.

This Holiness, which the Godly are set apart for, must not only be external, and in outward Appearance, so as to prevent Blame before Men; but internal and real, and what God himself will account such, who looks at

the Heart. It must likewise be universal :
 Not in a few Instances only, but in every
 1 Pet. 1. Step of the Life. *But as he who hath called*
 15. *you is holy, so be ye holy in all Manner of Con-*
 Phil. 4. 8, *versation. To the same Purpose writes the*
 9. *Apostle Paul to the Philippians. Finally, Bre-*
thren, whatsoever Things are true, whatsoever
Things are honest, whatsoever Things are just,
whatsoever Things are pure, whatsoever Things
are lovely ; if there be any Vertue, and if there
be any Praise, think on these Things. Those Things
which ye have both learned and received, and
heard and seen in me, do, and the God of Peace
shall be with you. God requires of us, that
we have a special Regard to Truth in all
our Words and Engagements, and shew a be-
coming Decency in our whole Behaviour,
carefully practising the Rules of Justice and
Righteousness in our Dealings with one an-
 Rom. 12. *other, without all Impurity, or Mixture of*
 17. *Sin. We must provide Things honest in the*
Sight of all Men ; and none must out-do us
in any Instance of Goodness: In one Word,
God has set apart the Godly for himself,
 Phil. 2. *That they may be blameless and harmless, the*
 15. *Sons of God, without Rebuke, in the Midst of a*
crooked and perverse Nation among whom they
should shine as Lights in the World.

(2.) He hath set apart the Godly, to be
 the blessed Instruments of advancing the In-
 terests of his Kingdom and Glory in the
 World. 'Twas for this End that God at first
 created Man upon the Earth ; but his Nature
 being now universally corrupted by the Fall,
 he is under a moral Incapacity for such a
 Work: But God creates his People anew,

giving them excellent Capacities and Qualifications for the Work he requires of them. This Honour have all the Godly. The *Psal-*
mist tells us, *That the Work of the Lord is ho-* Psal. 111
nourable. All his Works are so; there's none 3.
of them mean and trifling. All his Works of Creation are great, honourable, and glorious like himself, and worthy of himself: Neither can they be otherwise, because they are all the Result of infinite Wisdom. So are all his Works of Providence; and so is his stupendious Work of Redemption: And so likewise are all the Works wherein he is pleased to imploy his Servants and People. God bestows his Grace upon them, and this enables them to render him acceptable Service, not only in working out the Work of their own Salvation, but in shewing their Zeal and Concern for others, by doing all they can to engage them to his Service, and to mind the great Business of Religion. Do not imagine it belongs only to Magistrates and Ministers to advance Religion in the World: They are indeed chiefly concerned in this Work; but all that profess Godliness are concerned in it too. The meanest Saint on Earth is called and obliged to it, in his Station and Capacity, and if he is truly zealous and active, he may do God very acceptable Service: He that has but one Talent may be instrumental in advancing Religion in the World, if he lay out that Talent faithfully, as well as he that has ten Talents, tho' indeed not so much.

Sixthly, It implies God's setting apart the godly Man to partake of many rare and singu-

lar Privileges. I'm here enter'd into a very large Field, which might afford Matter for a long Discourse : But I shall only hint at these five or six Things.

(1.) The Godly are set apart for *Communion with God*; and this is a Privilege which none but the Godly can be Sharers of : For an Hypocrite shall not stand before God, neither can a profane Person have any Nearness with him : For (as the Apostle reasons) *What Communion hath Light with Darknes? And what Concord hath Christ with Belial?* The Psalmist proposes a very important Question: *Who shall ascend into the Hill of God? And who shall stand in his holy Place?* And answers it thus; *He that hath clean Hands, and a pure Heart; who hath not lifted up his Soul unto Vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.* The Meaning is, He that is holy in Heart and in Life; even he shall receive the Blessing from the Lord, and Righteousness from the God of his Salvation. O what a valuable Privilege is this! to be brought near God, and to live near him who is the Fountain of all Blessedness. Wonder not then if you hear David, with a particular Emphasis, saying, *Blessed is the Man whom thou chooseth, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy Courts.* Wherever the godly Man goes, he is sure to have the gracious Presence of God with him; and that alone is sufficient to support him, under all the Discouragements and Disquietudes he can meet with.

(2.) The godly Man is under the *Conduct of God's-unerring Spirit*. Even the best of the Saints, and the wisest of them, so long as they

they are in this World, if left to themselves, would quickly miscarry, and run themselves into continual Snares; and so they would be a ready Prey to every Temptation, and would be overwhelm'd with every Affliction or Difficulty: But they that are guided of God (as all the Godly are) are helped to keep their Garments clean. Our own Wisdom is so liable to Mistakes that it can never, with any Safety, be relied on: But let us look up to God for Counsel and Conduct, and he will make our Way plain and easy to us. What the Psalmist promised to himself, the same may every godly Man with the like Assurance promise to himself: *Thou wilt guide me with thy Counsel, and afterwards receive me to Glory.* Psal. 72.
24.

(3.) All Providences are sanctified to the godly Man; whether with Reference to himself in particular, or to the Church and Commonwealth in general, whereof he is a Member. That's an encouraging Word you have to this Purpose in the Epistle to the Romans: *And we know that all Things work together for Good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his Purpose.* Rom. 8.
28. The sharpest Trials, the heaviest Afflictions that a godly Man can meet with in the World; suppose Sickness, Pain, Reproaches, Loss of worldly Goods, Death of his nearest Relations, Persecution, Nakedness, Famine, Sword, Pestilence, or whatever else you can suppose may befall a Man in this World; and what shall I say, tho' 'twere even spiritual Desertion it self, all shall turn to his Advantage, and help forward the Interest of his Soul. Hence David acknowledges, to the Commendation of God's Grace,
That

Pfal. 119. 71. That it was good for him he had been afflicted. The godly Man learns many useful Lessons in the School of Affliction, which, perhaps, otherwise he had never learned, at least not so perfectly. Well then may the godly Man patiently endure all the Afflictions he meets with, since he is sure they will turn to his Good.

(4.) All the Godly are taught of God; And therefore, to be sure, they are well taught; they shall be ignorant of nothing that's necessary for them to know. *And all thy Children*
Iia. 54 13. shall be taught of the Lord. I remember Paul mentions it, as no small Privilege, *That he*
Acts 22. 3. was brought up at the Feet of Gamaliel, one of the most noted and fam'd Teachers of the Jewish Law, which that Age produc'd: But he was afterwards admitted to a far greater and more valuable Privilege, even to be taught of God; whose Instructions were infinitely more profitable to him, than the Instructions of all the learned Men in the World could have been. That's a sweet and memorable Promise, our blessed Lord made to his Disciples a little before his last Sufferings; *But*
Joh. 14. 26. the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my Name, he shall teach you all Things, and bring all Things to your Remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. If we are taught, we shall be made wise unto Salvation: He will teach us our Duty to himself, and our Duty to one another; he will teach us how to resist Temptations, to overcome Difficulties, to bear Afflictions, to carry aright under every Providence, and to manage our whole Work and Warfare. He will teach us how to read the Scriptures, how

to hear the Word preached, how to pray, how to sing Psalms, and how to communicate, so as to be edified by all these Exercises: And he will teach us how to give Alms, and do all other Works of Charity and Mercy, so as to be accepted in the Sight of God. He will teach us how to abound, and how to suffer Wants, how to deny our selves, and how to take up the Cross and follow him: He will teach us the Duty of every Season, and the Season of every Duty. He will not only infuse Grace into our Souls, but learn us how to exercise Grace on every Occasion: In a Word, he will teach us thorowly and perfectly.

(5.) The godly Man is under the *Divine Protection*: For *the Angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him.* What-^{Psal. 34.} ever Dangers the godly Man may be expos'd to, and whatever Afflictions he may be under, the Almighty Arm of *Jehovah* shall be underneath him to support him. *God shall deliver him in six Troubles: Yea, in seven there shall no evil touch him.* As often as he is in Trouble let him call upon God, he will^{Psal. 50.} hear him, and he shall glorify God. Nay, tho'^{15.} an Host should encamp round about him, he needs not be dismay'd, for the Mighty God is on his Side, who is able to deliver him from them all.

(6.) He hath also an Interest in all the *Promises* of the Word; which are exceeding great^{2 Pet. 1.} and precious: And they are all in Christ,^{4.} and in him Amen to the Glory of God. Time would fail me, to recount the one Half of^{2 Cor. 1.} those precious Promises that God hath, in^{20.} his

his Word, made to the godly Man: Suffice it therefore to observe to you in the general, that Godliness has the Promise of all Manner of Blessings; Blessings spiritual, temporal and eternal; Blessings to our Sou's, and Blessings to our Bodies; Blessings to our selves, and Blessings to our Posterity: *For Godliness* (says the Apostle) *is profitable unto all Things, having the Promise of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come.*

Tim. 4.
8.

Seventhly, For God to set apart him that is godly for himself, implies his setting the godly Man apart for the full and immediate Enjoyment of himself to all Eternity. The Godly are the *Heirs of Glory*, and when ever they are ripe for Heaven, they shall immediately enter into the *Joy of their Lord*; where they shall neither sin nor sorrow any more for ever. This is that *Kingdom prepared for them from the Foundations of the World*; where they shall be infinitely more happy than Tongue can express, or Heart can conceive. I shall here observe three Things to you concerning the eternal Felicity of the Godly.

Matt. 25.
34.

(1:) When they come to Heaven, they shall be made perfect in Holiness: For their Understanding shall then be fully enlightened. Here they are ignorant of many Things they should know, at least they don't know them perfectly: For, (to speak with the Apostle) *Now we know but in Part, and we see but through a Glass darkly*; but when we come to our glorified and triumphant State, we shall then have a most perfect and thorow Knowledge of every Thing that may make for the completing of our Happiness. Their Wills shall then

1 Cor. 13.
12.

then be only and wholly pliable to the Will of God, without the least Degree of Reluctancy against it. The Memory shall never let any Thing escape that's treasur'd up in it; and nothing shall be treasur'd up in the Memory but what is well worth the keeping there. Their Affections shall be so set upon God, and ravish'd with him, as to love, desire, and delight in nothing but him. The Use that the Soul shall then have for the Senses of the Body, such as Seeing and Hearing, will increase that Admiration of those glorious Objects, which they shall then see and hear. That Utterance or Expression of their Minds they shall then make Use of, shall be most Divine and Celestial; tending only wholly and continually to the Praise and Glory of God.

(2.) At the Resurrection they shall enjoy a most blessed Change in their Bodies: For *their vile Bodies shall be made like unto Christ's glorious Body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all Things unto himself.* Phil. 3. 21. And the Scripture assures us, *That the Righteous shall shine as Stars in the Firmament, in the Kingdom of their Father.* Matt. 13. 43. You may also see, in what a high Strain of Divine Elegancy the Apostle Paul describes the glorious Change that shall be then made in the Bodies of the Saints. *It is sown in Corruption, it is raised in Incorruption; It is sown in Dishonour, it is raised in Glory; It is sown in Weakness, it is raised in Power; It is sown a natural Body, it is raised a spiritual Body.* 1 Cor 15. 42, 43, 44.

Allow me to paraphrase a little upon this Passage of the Apostle. The Bodies of the Saints,

Saints, when they are buried, are not lost; but they are *sown*: *Sown*, I say, in Order to grow up again, and to be cast into another, and more excellent Mold. They are *sown in Corruption*: That is, laid in the Grave, on Purpose to moulder and rot: But they shall be *raised in Incorruption* never to decline or crumble any more; they shall be perfectly freed from all mortal Principles, so as never to die any more. *They are sown in Dishonour*. We put a Kind of Contempt upon them, by hiding them out of Sight; hiding them from the visible World, as Things no more fit to be admir'd or gaz'd upon. When they are laid in the Grave, they are base, vile and abject Things, not to be any more endur'd above Ground, for their gasty Countenance and noisom Smell. But *they shall be raised in Glory*. When they rise out of the Grave again, they shall bring nothing of earthliness with them, but shall be every Way fitted for a Re-union with their Souls, and to partake with their Souls in the Duty and Solace of Heaven. At the Resurrection, the Bodies of the Saints shall come forth from the Grave, in a bright, beautiful, and venerable Form. *They are sown in Weakness*: That is, poor, helpless, passive Things. They had no Life nor Feeling, but when they were in a State of Union with their Souls; and when that Union was dissolved, they were nothing but poor lifeless Lumps of Clay. But *they shall be raised in Power*; fitted to a Re-union, and the great Designs that are consequential upon it. *They shall be raised with a Temperament so pure and just, so lovely and vigorous, that no Disease*

or Infirmary shall ever find any Place in them, or be able to cramp them in their Operations. *They are sown natural Bodies*: When laid in the Grave, they are nothing but fleshy Things, made up of gross earthly Matter. But *they shall be raised spiritual Bodies*: That is, of a more pure and refin'd Nature; and of more noble and excellent Qualities than they had before. They will then be free from all animal Appetites, of Eating, Drinking, Sleeping and the like; which do now render them, not only unserviceable, but even hurtful and injurious to their Souls: For the Bodies of the Saints will then be in an entire Subjection to their Minds, and all the Members of their Bodies will be devoted Instruments of Righteousness. Then there will be no more a Law in their Members warring against the Law of their Minds; but the Mind will govern, and the Body obey, without the least Contest or Reluctancy for evermore.

(3.) They shall enjoy the infinite Love and Favour of God. They indeed enjoy many good Degrees of it in this Life, but they shall then enjoy infinitely more, even as much as their finite Capacities, raised to the greatest imaginable Height, shall be able to contain: For they shall drink and drink abundantly of those Rivers of Pleasures, that are at God's right Hand for evermore. All they enjoy of God now, is but like a few of the first ripe Grapes of *Eshcol*, that Land of Promise which is afar off: The full Vintage is yet in Reserve for them: Here they have but some small Drops of Happiness; the whole Ocean of their Bliss is yet to come; being

Matth. 25.
21.

Rom. 8.
17.

reserved for their glorified and triumphant State. Here they have but the Beginning, and Foretastes of the Glory that afterwards *shall be revealed* in them. In a Word, they shall enjoy all the Pleasures which their glorified Natures shall be capable of, universally to every Faculty of their Souls, and to every Member of their spiritualized Bodies. In Scripture the Saints, entering into their promised Inheritance; are said to *enter into the Joy of their Lord*. Strange! The Saints shall not only possess the Joy that God bestows, but the Joy that God Himself enjoys. And yet you see our Saviour assures us it shall be so. Hence the Apostle tells us, that they shall not only be *Heirs of God*, but *joynt Heirs with Christ*. And what Tongue is able to express, or rather, what Heart is able to conceive how much is comprehended under these two Expressions just now mentioned.

And thus you see what it is for the Lord to set apart him that is Godly for himself. I'm in the next Place to give you the Import of this Phrase in the Text. *The Lord will hear when I call unto him*: And here I shall condescend upon three particular Instances wherein the Lord will hear the godly Man, when he calls upon him.

Psal 50.
15.

First, The Lord will hear the godly Man, when he calls unto him for *Relief* from any Calamity, or Support under any Affliction he meets with in this Valley of Tears. Of this he has given us abundant Assurance in Scripture. *Call upon me*, (says he) *in the Day of Trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify*

rify me. Here then is the godly Man's War-
rant, and here is his Encouragement to come Heb. 4.
with Boldness unto the Throne of Grace, that he 16.
may obtain Mercy, and find Grace to help, in
Time of Need. The Godly have usually a
greater Share of Troubles than other People:
For many are the Afflictions of the Righteous. But Ps. 34. 19.
here is their Comfort, that they have one to
go to in all their Troubles, who is both able
and willing to help them; Nay, and has
plighted his Word for it. The Righteous cry, Ps. 34. 17.
and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of
all their Troubles. The Meaning is, he either
quickly delivers them, or else he supports
them under their Afflictions: He makes his
Grace sufficient for them, and enables them to
bear all their Trials with Patience and Sub-
mission. The Experience of the Saints in all
Ages is a sufficient Demonstration of the
Truth of this, and a solid Ground of Encour-
agement for every godly Man, to cast all his
Care and Burden on the Lord; believing
that he will sustain him, and perfect what
concerns him. His Place of Defence shall be the
Munition of Rocks; where he shall remain se-
cure. Solomon tells us, The Name of the Lord is Psal. 18.
a strong Tower, the Righteous run unto it, and Prov. 18.
are safe. The Meaning is, God is a sufficient 10.
Defence to his People from all their Enemies,
and a Support under all their Afflictions.
You'll hear how David expresses himself to
this Purpose, I will love thee, O Lord, my Strength.
The Lord is my Rock, and my Fortress, and my De- Psal. 18.
liverer: My God, my Strength in whom I will 1-6.
trust, my Buckler, and the Horn of my Salvation,
and my high Tower. I will call upon the Lord,
L. who

who is worthy to be praised; so shall I be saved from mine Enemies. The Sorrows of Death compassed me, and the Floods of ungodly Men made me afraid; the Sorrows of Hell compassed me about, the Snares of Death prevented me. In my Distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God: He heard my Voice out of his Temple; and my Cry came before him, even into his Ears. From whence you may plainly see what Encouragement the Godly have to call upon God in the Day of their Trouble, and how ready he is to answer them.

Secondly, The Lord will hear the godly Man when he calls unto him complaining of any of his Enemies for their Unjustice and Oppression. When the godly Man lodges his Complaint before God against any of his Adversaries, he is sure to be heard, and God will take the Work of avenging and punishing in his own Hand: And truly a Man had far better have a Complaint prefer'd against him before the greatest, and most powerful Prince on Earth, than to have the meanest of those whom the Lord hath set apart for himself complaining to God of him; for in this Case, he may assure himself he will meet with some remarkable Rebuke in the Course of Divine Providence. As therefore you tender your own Welfare, beware of giving any of them that belong to God the least Occasion of Complaint against you: For their Redeemer is Mighty, he shall plead their Cause with thee. His Omnipotence stands engaged for their Protection; and his Justice and Faithfulness are so far interested in them, as to avenge their Quarrel, which the proudest, the highest, the most power-

Prov. 23.
11.

powerful Oppressor will find himself an unequal Match for. *He is the Lord God of Hosts,* Pf. 24. 8.
mighty in Battle, and strong in Power. He has all the Hosts and Armies of Heaven and Earth at his Command, and can make the weakest and meanest of his Creatures the Executioners of his just Vengeance upon the Enemies of his People; as you know he made *Flies, Lice, Frogs and Catterpillars* do very considerable Execution upon *Pharaoh* and his Subjects, for their Cruelty and Oppression towards the Israelites.

Thirdly, The Lord will hear the godly Man when he calls unto him for any Thing that's necessary either for his Soul or Body. Hence the *Psalmist* assures us, that *the Eyes of the Lord are upon the Righteous, and his Ears are open* Pf. 34. 15.
to their Cry. His Eyes are never off his Children; he looks upon them with a singular Complacency, as well as with a tender and watchful Concern: And therefore they are sure of an Answer of Peace to all their Prayers that are put up in Faith. Ever since Men began to call upon the Name of the Lord, he has been a God hearing Prayer; and yet his Ear is not heavy, but he is as ready to hear his People now as ever: Possibly God does not indeed presently, and at the first Call answer the godly Man; but sometimes lets him cry long: But, whenever he sees it most seasonable, and most for the Interest of the godly Man, undoubtedly he will hear and answer him: So that the Godly have sufficient Encouragement to present their Requests unto him: God allows them to open their Minds freely to him on every Occasion; and the more fre-

frequent and importunate they are, he makes them the more welcome, and will be the more ready to answer all their Requests: For he loves to hear 'em, and delights to find in them the Spirit of Prayer. The same Spirit of Prayer (if you'll indulge me the Expression) is the Key by which the Believer opens Heaven's Doors, and draws down from thence Multitudes of rich Blessings daily.

And thus having finished what I judged necessary to be open'd up in the Words of the Text, I shall now proceed to make some Application; which I shall direct to two Sorts of People; namely, to the *Wicked* and to the *Godly*. To the *Wicked* I shall say these Four Things.

First, Hath the Lord set apart him that is Godly for himself? Then it concerns you to consider, what will become of you: *Where shall the Unrighteous and the Ungodly appear?* Verily, if they continue in their Wickedness, there remains nothing for them, but a fearful looking for of Judgement and fiery Indignation, wherewith God shall devour his Adversaries. Hear your Doom pronounced by the Psalmist, and a frightful Doom it is, which may make your Knees to smite one upon another. *The Wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the Nations that forget God.* I beseech you therefore, as you love your Souls, Forsake your evil Ways, and your unrighteous Thoughts, and turn unto the Lord, for he will have Mercy upon you, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. Make serious Religion your Study; for without it 'tis impossible you can enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; nay, without it you are eternally

un-

undone. Many of you never yet knew any thing of Religion, unless perhaps it be something of the Profession of it; and what, I pray you, will that avail you? Mistake it not, Religion is a serious and weighty Business; a Business wherein you must not trifle; but exert your utmost Diligence and Vigour; otherwise you will but deceive your selves, and go down to the bottomless Pit with a Lie in your right Hand. I assure you, you will find the Exercise of serious Religion both pleasant and profitable: Whatever Misapprehensions ye may now have of it, when you look upon it only at a Distance, if you'll but once try it, you will never more have one harsh Thought of it. I assure you, you will find infinitely greater Satisfaction in mortifying your Lusts, than ever you had in fulfilling them.

Secondly, I beseech you, beware of offending any of the Godly how* mean soever they may be as to their outward Circumstances in the World: Beware of opposing them: Beware of reviling and reproaching them; Beware of hating them: Beware of persecuting them: Beware of doing them the least Hurt; for *He* that hath set them apart for himself, will espouse their Cause. In opposing them, you really oppose God, and will undoubtedly draw down the Vengeance of Heaven upon your selves and upon your Posterity: And are you a Match for the Almighty? Or, are you able to grapple with Omnipotence? When he contends, will you be able to stand your Ground, and defend your selves? Many have pay'd dear for their Opposition to the Godly; and *twere better*

Luke 16.
2.

for a Man, that a Millstone were hanged about his Neck, and he cast into the Depths of the Sea, than to offend one of the least of them that belong to God, and that he has set apart for himself. The Godly are God's Property, and cannot be hurt, nor so much as touch'd without the highest Sacrilege. God looks upon all the Injuries done to the Godly, as if they were done immediately to himself; and will resent them accordingly: And the Vengeance of his Temple is always the sorest and most dreadful Vengeance. I assure you, the Godly have one to take Part with them, who is mighty to save, and mighty also to destroy.

Isa. 26.
11.

The Prophet says, *The Fire of thine Enemies shall devour them*: That is, the Vengeance wherewith God is wont to destroy his Enemies. 'Tis an Expression that denotes the very Height of Vengeance: Even such Vengeance as brings certain and irreparable Ruin. We say of Fire and Water, they have no Mercy; such is the Wrath of God with Reference to his Enemies, especially such as oppress and persecute his peculiar People: When once it comes upon them, it must destroy them; his Eyes will not pity, nor will his Hand spare them, tho' Noah, Moses and Samuel, who are most noted in Scripture, for having Power with God, and being instrumental in turning away his Anger; I say, tho' even these should interceed, they would not be able to stay God's Hand, when he begins to contend with his Adversaries, and to make Inquisition for the Blood of his Saints, that has been shed upon the Earth. And if Merax must be cursed, and cursed bitterly, because

cause they came not to the Help of the Lord against the Mighty; that is, because they came not to help the Lord's People against their mighty and powerful Enemies: How much more shall they be cursed bitterly, that is, punished severely, that persecute God's People, and seek to destroy them. There is not a Threatning in all the Bible but what stands against them, and may be executed upon them, for ought they know, every Moment. When the Lord stands up to plead Zion's Controversy, and to contend with her Enemies, the Year of his Vengeance comes, even the Vengeance of his Temple: And then a full Redemption shall be given them of all their Oppression and Cruelty from the Lord of Hosts, whom, I may say, they have oppos'd and persecuted, in opposing and persecuting his People and Interest in the World. And therefore look to your selves that ye stir not up his Anger against you.

Thirdly, Encourage the Godly as much as you can: You'll find your Interest in this as much as in any Thing; for 'twill give you an Interest in their Prayers, and how beneficial that may be to you, who can tell? This one Thing is certain, that God's Ear is open to their Prayers; and the effectual fervent Prayer of the righteous Man availeth much. Who knows what Blessings they may draw down from Heaven upon you? Even Blessings upon your Bodies, Blessings upon your Souls, Blessings upon your Relations, Blessings upon your Estates, and Blessings upon all your other Concerns. O, what a Privilege is it to have an Interest in the Prayers of the Godly and how much

Reason is there why the Godly should be encouraged! For they are the Pillars and Support of a Nation, that preserve it from Ruin. You know if there had been but *Ten righteous Persons in Sodom*, they had blown the Storm of Fire and Brimstone over, which in a few Hours buried the wicked Sodomites, and those of Gomorrah and the other Cities of the Plain, in Ashes. Nay, the destroying Angel's Hand was in a Manner tied up, so long as godly Lot was there. Hence in the History of the Destruction of that miserable Place, you meet with these remarkable Words of the Angel to Lot: *Haste thee, escape thither (meaning to Zoar) for I cannot do any Thing till thou come thither.*

Gen. 19.
22.

This Church and Nation hath, for many successive Generations, had a Remnant of godly Persons among them, who, I may say, have preserved the Life of the Nation, when its Neck hath been in a Manner upon the Block. But alas! these are either gone, or wearing away apace, and a new Generation rising in their Room: And O, how unhappy shall we be, if, by degenerating from the Power of Godliness, we shall prove the People that open the Sluices, and bring in an Inundation of desolating Judgments among us? How far are we degenerate from what we sometime ago appeared to be? Religion begins now to run low and dreggy, and many are turned loose and profane, both in their Principles and in their Practice. A sad Symptom! And verily unless we remember from whence we are fallen, repent and do our first Works, we have Reason to fear that God will come

Rev. 2. 5.

come quickly, and remove our Candlestick out of its Place. And which is yet more sad and threatening, we truly grow worse at a Time when better Things might have been expected from us.

It has indeed many Times been the Lot of the Godly to be reckon'd the Troublers of the Land, and those who obstruct the publick Good. But whatsoever wicked and profane Men may think, they are in Truth *the Chariots of Israel, and the Horse-men thereof.* Under God they are the Defence and Security of these Places where they live: For the Breaches that wicked and ungodly Men make by their profane Courses, they make up by their Prayers and Tears, by their Fastings and Wrestling with God to turn away his Wrath. And are these then to be hated and persecuted? Are they not much rather to be encouraged?

Fourthly, Follow the holy Example, and the pious Instructions and Admonitions of the Godly: You may learn much from them, providing you are but willing. Converse often with them: For they are *the excellent Ones in all the Earth*, and their Society is very desirable, and their Converse improving and edifying. And, as Solomon observes, *He that walketh with the Wise shall be wise; but the Companion of Fools shall be destroyed.* Prov. 13. 23.

The Godly are the wisest of Men: For they are wise for their Souls, and they understand their true Interest; and that's more than any worldly or wicked Man doth; how much carnal Wisdom and Policy soever he may have. They are filled with spiritual and heavenly Wisdom, even that Wisdom that cometh

cometh down from above from the Father of Lightes; and that is by far the most excellent, the most desirable and useful Wisdom, because it leads Men to Heaven. So that by conversing frequently with them, you may, through the Blessing of God, be made wise for your Souls, wise for Heaven, and wise unto Salvation.

I am in the next Place to address my self unto the *Godly*, to such I shall say these five Things.

First, You see what a vast Change to the better the Grace of God has made as to your State: For while you were in a natural Estate, you were the Children of Wrath as well as others: But now you are in a State of Favour and Friendship with the most High: Ye are the Objects of his special Love and Care, and the *Lord has set you apart for himself*: And 'tis the Will of God that you should have the Comfort of your present happy Condition. Know then that God interests himself in all your Concerns, both those that relate to your Souls, and those that relate to your Bodies: Your Enemies shall be his Enemies, and your Friends his Friends; he will on all Occasions espouse your Cause, and if you'll be diligent to improve daily in Religion you may expect he will daily more and more manifest himself to you. There is not a Promise in all the Scripture, but what you have an undoubted Right to, and may claim an Interest in: And you may expect, to your comfortable Experience, and eternal Upmaking, a full Accomplishment in due Time, of all that he hath said he will do for his People,
or

or bestow upon them. And you may assure your selves, that your eternal Salvation is so well secured to you, that it shall never be in the Power of Devils or Men to deprive you of it. And therefore, let me beseech you to be thankful to that God, who has already done so much for you, and who, you may expect, will do yet infinitely more: And express your Thankfulness to him, by your Constancy, your Activity and Zeal for his Service. If you do so, every Day's Experience will let you see more and more of the great Gain of Godliness, and convince you that your Labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.

Secondly, Hath the Lord set you apart for himself? Then I intreat you beware of alienating your selves from him; but cleave fast to him, and to his Ways and Interest with full Purpose of Heart, all the Days of your Lives; and be faithful to him even unto the Death. Let me exhort you in the *Apostle's* Words to the *Corinthians*; Therefore, my be-¹ *Cor. 15.*
loved Brethren, be ye steadfast and unmovable,^{58.}
always abounding in the Work of the Lord, for-
asmuch as ye know, that your Labour shall not
be in vain in the Lord. Study to grow daily more and more holy, adorning the Doctrine of God your Saviour in all Things, and walking worthy of that holy and heavenly Vocation wherewith ye are called. Beware that the Name of God be not blasphem'd among the Gentiles through you, nor the righteous Ways of the Lord evil spoken of on your Account; and grieve not the holy Spirit of Promise, whereby ye are sealed unto the Day of Redemption. But study to have your Light
so

so shining before Men, that they seeing your good Works, may glorify your Father which is in Heaven. Some of the Godly have fallen into very gross and scandalous Sins; witness Noah, Lot, David, Peter, and sundry others recorded in Scripture. And alas! how does this open the Mouths of Adversaries, and wound Religion in the House of her Friend? See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as Fools, but as Wise. Take good heed both to your Hearts and your Lives, and beware of returning with the Dog to the Vomit, or with the Sow that was washed, to wallow again in the Mire. Have always a Jealousy of

Jerm. 17. your selves; For he is a Fool that trusteth to his own Heart; because the Heart is deceitful above all Things and desperately wicked, who can know it?

Thirdly, Pity them that are yet Strangers to God and to Godliness; that are yet serving their Lusts, and are led Captives by Satan at his Will. As the Elect of God, dearly beloved, put on Bowels of Compassion towards them that are running headlong to their own Destruction; that are as it were, with both Hands pulling down the Vengeance of God both on themselves and their Posterity. You have, by the Grace of God, escap'd the same Snarcs that still hold them: Shew your Gratitude to that God who has graciously delivered you, by your Compassion towards them; pity and pray for them, that God may open their Eyes, and let them see their Folly and Danger ere it be too late; study to let them see that the Course they now follow will be Bitterness in the End.

As

SERM. VI. *Privilege and Happiness.*

173

As ye have Opportunity, do all you can to recommend Religion to them, and to engage them to the Exercise of, it. *Has the Lord set you apart for himself?* Testifie your Gratitude to him for such distinguishing Kindness, by recommending his Service to others: For I assure you, the more active and zealous you are this Way, you'll be the higher in Favour with God. Has God bestowed his Grace upon you? His Design was not that you should receive his Grace in vain, but that you should carefully improve it, not only for the Comfort and Advantage of your own Souls, but likewise for the Benefit and Edification of others, in endeavouring all that in you lies to bring many Sons and Daughters to him. I assure you, you'll find this to be the effectual Way to increase and strengthen your own Stock of Grace.

Fourthly, Study to get Corruption more and more subdued in your Souls. The best of God's People have much remaining Corruption in them, and so long as they are in the Body, they will not, they cannot get the entire Victory over it: But the less Corruption you have, and the more holy and unblameable you are in your Conversation, you will look so much the more like those whom *the Lord hath set apart for himself*. And therefore, let me exhort you, in the Words of the *Apostle to the Hebrews; Leaving the first Principles of the Doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto Perfection*. Study to grow in Grace, and in the Knowledge of God; and never be so foolish as to sit down upon your Attainments, or dream that you are already perfect; but
with

Heb. 6. 1.

Phil.
14.

3. with the Apostle Paul, Press towards the Mark for the Prize of the high Calling of God in Christ Jesus. The more holy you are, you'll look the more like those whom the Lord hath set apart for himself; You are the more ripe for Heaven and Glory, and you'll get the sooner there: And the more holy you are now, you shall have the larger Degrees of Glory in Heaven.

Fifthly, Whatsoever Difficulties and Discouragements you shall meet with in the World, on the Score of Religion, never think the worse of God, and of his Ways for these; but if to live Godly in the World be to be vile in the Eyes of the profane and unthinking Part of Mankind, and expose you to their Hatred and Ridicule, you must both resolve and study to be yet more vile in their Eyes, by living more Godly. The Scripture

1 Tim.
12.

3. more than once assures us, that whosoever will live Godly must lay their Account to suffer Persecution. And we must through much Tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God. But our blessed Lord Christ hath sufficiently comforted and encouraged his People against all the Troubles and Inconveniencies we can meet with for the Sake of Religion, while he says,

Aas
22.

14. In the World ye shall have Tribulation; but be of good Cheer, I have overcome the World. By the Sufferings that Christ underwent for us in the Days of his Flesh, he hath sweetened a suffering Lot to his People. Depend on God, and he will powerfully support you under all the Opposition and Afflictions you can meet with: For he will keep him in perfect Peace (says the Prophet Isaiah) whose Mind

Joh.
33.

Mind is stayed on him, because he trusteth in him: Isa. 26. 4.

And therefore as the same Prophet subjoins,

Trust ye in the Lord forever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting Strength.

If you'll depend on God for through-bearing Grace, he will make his Grace sufficient for you; and then you

shall be able to do every Thing he requires of you, and to bear every Thing that he,

in his holy and wise Providence, shall think fit to lay upon you; and you shall find,

that *Christ's Yoke is really easy, and his Burden* Matt. 11.

light. Be daily touching if it were but the Hem

of Christ's Garment by Faith, and you'll find such a Measure of Divine Virtue entering into

your Souls, as will make you lively and vigorous, active and diligent in his Service, notwithstanding of all the Discouragement you

can meet with in the Exercise of Religion: Go up through the Wilderness of this World

leaning upon your Beloved; and he will powerfully support you, under all your Trials:

Tho' ye should be hated and forsaken of all Men, yet you have his Promise; *That he will* Heb. 13.

never leave you, nor forsake you. He will be

your God and Guide, your Strength and Support even unto Death. Be faithful to him,

and you may promise with David, *When your* Psal. 27.

Father and Mother forsake you, then the Lord

will take you up. Nay I may say the less you

are befriended by Men, you may expect the more Favour and Friendship from God. The

more you endure for his Sake, and the Gospel's, the more you should love Religion

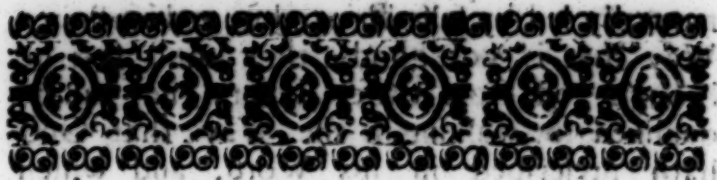
and delight in it; because the more you suffer this Way, the greater shall be your Re-

ward in Heaven. And now, *the God of all*

Grace

1 Pet. 5. Grace, who hath called us unto his eternal Glory by Jesus Christ, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be Glory and Dominion for ever and ever. Amen.





SERMON VII.

Of the great Advantage of
walking in the Way of
Understanding.

PROV. ix. 6.

*For sake the Foolish and live ; and go in
the Way of Understanding.*

THere are three Things required of every
Christian : That he be sound in the
Faith, that he be stedfast in the Profession of
it, and that he be constant and diligent in the
Practice of every Thing that our holy Religion
requires of us. If we fail in any of these ; if we
are either unsound in the Faith, or shall fall
from the Profession of it, or neglect to conform
our Lives to the Rules of Religion : In either
of these Cases, the great Author of our Re-
ligion will never own us for his Disciples, but
will disclaim all Relation to us, and com-
mand us to depart from him for ever. 'Tis
the practical Part of Religion which I am

M now

now to discourse of : And becaule Men are naturally led by false Principles, and walk in a Way that is not good ; they must first be brought off from these, before they can be qualified for walking in the Way that God hath prescribed in his Word, and which will certainly make them happy in Time and to Eternity : We must *forsake the Foolish and live*, before we can go in the *Way of Understanding*. My Text shews us the vast Difference there is between the Way of Sin, and the Way of Holiness ; in one of which all the the Children of Men are walking. It deserves our serious Consideration to observe how the Holy Ghost does here brand wicked Men with the Character of *Fools or foolish People* ; and how highly he commends the Way of Religion, by calling it *the Way of Understanding* : And methinks, were there no other Thing, to disengage us entirely from the Way of Sin and Rebellion against God, than this, that all the Time we walk in that Way, we really *play the Fool and Mad-man*. it is sufficient ; and were there nothing else to recommend practical Religion to us, but that 'tis the *Way of Understanding*, that is, the Way wherein all that understand their true Interest walk, it is enough to tie us to it for ever.

This Chapter represents *Christ* and *Sin* as Rivals for the Souls of Men : And here we are told, how both make their Court to the Soul, and what Arguments they use to have its Consent, to gain Possession of it, and keep it. The Design of this Representation is to set Life and Death, Good and Evil, the Blessing and the Curse before us. *Christ*

is here, as it were standing upon Mount *Geri-
zim*, the Mountain of Blessings; and *Sin* again
standing upon Mount *Ebal*, the Mountain
of Curses: And you see, they are both cal-
ling to Passengers, to draw them to them-
selves. But I intend not to enlarge in open-
ing up the Context.

If you'll cast your Eye upon the 5th Verse
of this Chapter, you'll hear *Christ*, the eternal
Wisdom of the Father, calling and inviting
Sinners to come in, and partake of the noble
Provision he hath made for them, *Come eat of
my Bread, and drink of the Wine which I have
mingled.* And in this Verse, he directs them
as to their Practice, who have accepted of
his Invitation. I hope some of you have been
eating of Wisdom's Bread, and drinking of
the Wine which she hath mingled: I hope
you have *tasted that the Lord is gracious*, and
can from comfortable Experience say, with
that holy Man *David*, *One Day in thy Courts* Psal. 84.
is better than a Thousand. Well then, would 10.
you at once testify your Gratitude to him,
and both secure and increase your spiritual
Comforts? Here, I assure you, is the infallible
Way to all this; follow the Advice given
you in the Text. *For sake the Foolish and live;
and go in the Way of Understanding.*

In which Words you may take Notice of
these two Things (1.) *Wisdom*, or our Lord
Jesus Christ is here calling you off from the
wrong Way, the Way that will lead all those
to everlasting Ruine, that continue in it: *For-
sake the Foolish and live.* (2.) He is setting
you in the right Way, the Way that will
bring you present Comfort and Felicity, and

lead you to eternal Happiness in Heaven. And go in the Way of Understanding. There's no Difficulty in the Words, and if any Thing needs to be explain'd in them, I shall have Occasion to meet with it in the Sequel of this Discourse.

I intend (as the Lord shall assist) to speak to both these Branches of my Text distinctly: Of the *First*, I shall speak more briefly, and of the *Second* more fully. As to the *First*, wherein, I told you, we are called off from the wrong Way, you may observe these two Things; namely, That which we are exhorted to; *For sake the Foolish*: And the Encouragement which is given us to fall in with this Advice; *and live*. As to the Exhortation it self, I shall only consider the various Readings of this Part of the Text, and gather from each of 'em, as I go along, what I judge, may, through the Divine Blessing, be for our Instruction: And,

First, Some read the Words *for sake Simplicities*, or, *for take the simple Ones*. To be *simple* is sometimes, in this Book of *Proverbs*, taken in a good, and sometimes in a bad Sense. When it is taken in a good Sense, it signifies, those that are Teachable, Harmless, Sincere, and Upright; but withal, such as would be easily deceived and hurt by Satan and wicked Men, and led aside, unless God, in whom they trust as a gracious Father, did keep and preserve them. In this Sense, I judge, 'tis to be taken, when Solomon says, *Smite the Scorners, and the Simple will beware*. But the Word is frequently taken also in a bad Sense, even for those that don't regard their

their Souls, and the Concerns of Eternity; who do not see the Excellency of Religion, who suffer themselves to be led away by the Misrepresentation of Things, which Satan that old Serpent makes to them; by which Means, they are brought to take up with the World, and the Gratifications of Sense. And are not these very simple People, who suffer themselves to be *led Captives by Satan at his Will*? Are not these poor simple, unthinking People that let out their Affections to the perishing Enjoyments of Time, and neglect the great Concerns of Religion, and the *Things that belong to their Peace*? Are not these exceeding Foolish and Simple, who prefer the Service of Satan and their Lusts to the Service of the *ever blessed God*? Can any thing be more Simple and Foolish, than for Men, indu'd with reasonable and immortal Souls, to mind only earthly and temporal Things, that can neither profit nor deliver them, and that Death will quickly bereave 'em of; and in the mean Time neglect the *one Thing needful*? In this last Sense 'tis plain the Word is to be understood, according to this reading of the Words, *Forfake the simple Ones.*

Alas! what simple and unthinking Fools are the Generality of the World, that cannot be brought to have a true Notion and Taste of Religion, and a just Way of thinking and judging of serious Godliness. Whatsoever foolish and unaccountable Impressions many People have, especially of the serious Part of Religion; if they could but once be brought to make an Experiment of it, and to try Wisdom's Ways, they would soon find the

Prov. 3.
17.

Truth of Solomon's Observation that *Wisdom's Ways are Ways of Pleasantness, and all her Paths are Peace.* They would quickly find, that all the Pleasures of Sense are but such dull and empty Shadows, as are not once to be compar'd to the substantial and solid Pleasures that are inseparable from Religion: They would find that there's infinitely more Satisfaction in mortifying their Lusts, than there can be in gratifying and fulfilling 'em. Let me therefore beseech you, by all the Regard you are bound to have for your Souls that ly at Stake, *Forsake the simple, unthinking Herd of the World:* For they are most unsuitable Companions for them that are *asking the Way to Zion, and have their Faces thitherward.* Come intirely off from them, if ever you intend to make Religion your Business: For they may well hinder, they can never further you in it.

Secondly, Some read the Words, *Let Folly go.* Sin is in Scripture frequently stigmatized under the Name of *Folly*, and Sinners under the Name of *Fools*. So that to *let Folly go* is, in one Word, to forsake our Lusts, and to engage in a constant Warfare against 'em. I might here shew you, in a great many Particulars, that Sin is very justly called *Folly*; but shall only hint briefly at three Things, which I humbly conceive are sufficient to this Purpose.

(1.) 'Tis only Sin that both puts, and keeps us in a State of Distance from God; for before Man was a Sinner, he lived very near God *Adam*. in a State of Innocence, convers'd with God Face to Face, and had a most

most intimate Communion with him: But alas! Sin robb'd him of this glorious and truly valuable Privilege. See what the Prophet *Isaiah* says to this Purpose; *But your Sins have separated between you and your God, and your Iniquities have hid his Face from you, that he will not hear you.* At first there was a happy Correspondence settled between God and Man, till Sin set them at Variance: And as long as Men continue in their Sins, the Difference is kept up, and the Distance increased. And is it not then the very Height of Folly for Men to continue in their Sins, when at this rate, they must live without God in the World? And who can sufficiently describe the Misery of those that live in a State of Distance from him who is the Fountain of Life and Happiness? So long as a Man continues in his Sins, God cannot look upon him, but he must at the same Time be angry with him, for *he is angry with the Wick-* *Psal. 7. 11.*
ed every Day. Is it not extreme Folly for Men to continue in that State, wherein they can have no Favour with God? And what Folly is it for them, to provoke the Almighty to Wrath against themselves? or are they able to contend with him?

(2.) Sin has done us much Mischief already: It has brought down upon us all those Miseries and Calamities, that we have endured, and all the Trouble we shall ever meet with, will be allenarly owing to our Sins. All the Pain, Sicknes, Sorrow, or any other Kind of Misery we have endured, or shall yet endure, are the bitter Fruits of our Sins. Before Sin enter'd into the World, this Earth was a

perfect Paradise, wherein there was nothing to disturb or disquiet us: But no sooner did Man become a Sinner, but immediately a whole Deluge of Miseries broke in upon the World. So that it can't but be great Folly for Men to allow themselves in their Sins. The Prophet *Jeremiah*, speaking to the *Jews*, of the Calamities they were under, tells them,

Jerm. 2.
17.

Have ye not procured this unto your selves, in that you have forsaken the Lord your God, when he led you by the Way? And again he tells

Jerm. 4.
18.

them, *Their Ways and their Doings had procured these Things to them.* And now what more unaccountable Folly can Men be guilty of, than to harbour and encourage that which is the sole Cause of so much Hurt and Mischief to them; and which is every Way so far contrary to, and inconsistent with their own Interest and Welfare.

(3.) Sin will undo us eternally, if we do not forsake it in Time. Sin has done us much Mischief already, but 'twill yet do us infinitely more, if we are so foolish as to go on in our Trespases: And truly all the Hurt that Sin does to Men in this Life, is nothing compar'd with what it will do to them, if they cannot be brought off from their Sins. We must either turn from our Sins now, or else they will ruin us for ever: They that do not mourn for their Sins now, shall burn for them everlastingly. Is it not then most sad, to see the Folly of many People, that cannot be drawn off from their Sins, notwithstanding of all that the Word of God says against them, and notwithstanding of all that they have really suffered by them? I beseech

seech you therefore to stand still and consider
 what you have been doing, and what the
 End of these Things will be: Will they not
 be Bitterness in the End? When God comes
 to reckon with you, what will you answer
 for your selves? Or, how will you excuse
 your selves? Sure you cannot pretend that
 you were ignorant of the Danger of Sin;
 since that is sufficiently pointed out to you
 in the Word of God: And as little can you
 alledge that you had not Time to mortify
 your Lusts; for what was you doing all the
 Time God gave you to live in the World?
 Pray consider Things better: What have
 your Sins done for you? Or what can they
 do for you? Are the Pleasures of Sin to be
 laid in the Ballance, either with the present
 Pleasures of Religion, or the future and eter-
 nal Joys of Heaven, which you shall forgo
 for ever; if you are the Fools to continue
 in your Sins? And has not God assured you
 that he will wound the Head of all these that
 go on in their Trespases? Consider also, how
 desirous, nay how earnest God is, that ye
 should, by forsaking your Sins, escape that
 Wrath which you have made your selves so
 obnoxious to. To this Purpose you may see
 what a solemn Protestation God makes to us
 by the Prophet Ezekiel, *Say unto them, as I* Ezek. 33.
live, saith the Lord God, I have no Pleasure in 11.
the Death of the Wicked but that the Wicked
turn from his Way and live: Turn ye, turn
ye from your evil Ways; for why will ye die,
O House of Israel? You see here God has
 not only plighted his Word, but in a Man-
 ner pawned his Life, that he is so far from
 delight-

delighting in your Destruction, that, on the contrary, he presses and solicites you, in the most moving Manner, to turn from your Sins, and live. So that 'tis plainly your own wilful Obstinacy, if you go on in your Sins and perish. And in another of the Prophets you'll see with how much Condescension God offers to reason the Matter with you, and to let you see both the Advantage of forsaking your Sins, and the certain Danger of continuing in them. Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord: tho' your Sins be as Scarlet, they shall be as white as Snow; tho' they be red like Crimson, they shall be as Wool. If you be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the Good of the Land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the Sword; for the Mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

Isa. 1. 18,
19, 20.

Thirdly, You see our Translators read the Words, *Forsake the Foolish*. Sin being in Scripture called *Folly*, 'tis the Wicked and Ungodly, the Workers of Iniquity that are here called *Foolish* or *Fools*: And then by *forsaking the Foolish* we are to understand two Things.

(1.) Forsaking that Way and Course of Life, which the foolish and ungodly Part of Mankind are walking in. We must beware of following them; for they are walking in the broad Way that leads to Destruction: They are walking (to use the Apostle's Words) according to the Prince of the Power of the Air, the Spirit that now worketh in the Children of Disobedience. Their Way is contrary to the Way wherein God has commanded us to walk, and in which we are all obliged to walk.

Eph. 2. 2.

walk. We are under the strictest Obligations to live up to the Rules of the Gospel, as ever we would expect to go to Heaven. The Gospel teacheth us, *That denying all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present World.* Tit. 2.12. We who were at the Lord's Table, have come under new Obligations to this: And therefore let us remember, *the Vows of God are upon us*; and he expects a full and speedy Performance of what we have promised. Neither can any of you from henceforth follow such profane Courses, as perhaps you have done formerly, without incurring the Guilt of a most dreadful and provoking Perjury, and exposing your selves to all the Curtes that are written in the Word of God: Nay you have indeed upon the Matter imprecated the Vengeance of Heaven upon your selves, if ever you shall turn again to Folly. And therefore let me exhort you in the Words of the Apostle Peter, *Let the Time past of your Lives suffice you to have wrought the Will of the Gentiles, when ye walked in Lasciviousness, Excess of Wine, Lusts, Revellings, Banquetings, and abominable Idolatries.* 1 Pet. 4. 3.

(2.) By it we are to understand also forsaking the Company and Society of profane and ungodly Men, especially familiar Converse with them. *Evil Company corrupts good Manners*, and Multitudes have been ruined by bad Company. The remaining Corruption of our Natures is like *Tinder*, apt to catch Fire, and to be kindled by the least Spark of a Temptation: And therefore we had need to know well, with whom we converse, especially,

1 Cor. 5.
9, 10.

especially, whom we chuse for our familiar and intimate Companions. 'Tis true it will perhaps be impossible for us not to converse sometimes with profane People; for (as the Apostle somewhere observes) *tho' we are not to company with Fornicators*, that is, we are not to choose to converse unnecessarily with any, that are, in any Sort, openly profane; yet (says he) *not altogether with the Fornicators of this World, or with the covetous, or Extortioners, or with Idolaters; for then we must needs go out of the World.* But this I say, we must as much as we can, shun their Company as a Thing dangerous to us.

Fourthly, Some read the Words thus, *For-sake O foolish Ones:* And then we must make this Supplement to them, *Your own evil Ways;* that is, those sinful Courses you have formerly accustomed your selves to. This is a Caution necessary for every one of us: Especially 'tis necessary for such of us as have been at the *Lord's Table*. Have not all of us *been too long the Workers of Iniquity?* And have not we who were at the *Lord's Table* in the most solemn Manner, in the Sight of God, and before Angels and Men renounced the Devil, the World and the Flesh? You have sworn, that henceforth you will walk before God *in Newness of Life*, and that you will be *holy in all Manner of Conversation*, *holy even as he also who has called you is holy*, that you will be *perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect*; and that you will be *pure even as he is pure*. And therefore, it after such solemn Engagements ye shall return with the *Dog to its Vomit, and with the Sow that was washed*

washed to wallow again in the Mire, your last State shall be worse than the first, and ye shall be seventold more the Children of Wrath than formerly. You have put your Hand to God's Plough, and if you look back, you are not fit for the Kingdom of Heaven, and shall be deem'd not to belong to it. Remember Lot's Wife: She but looked back to Sodom, and for that God set her up for a Monument of his Displeasure to future Generations; She was turned into a Pillar of Salt. The Psalmist says, As for such as turn aside unto their crooked Ways, Psal. 125. the Lord shall lead them forth with the Workers of Iniquity. The Meaning is, they shall be ranked among the worst of Sinners, and marked out as those that shall receive the sorest Punishment. God says to us by the Apostle, If any Man draw back, my Soul shall have no Pleasure in him: That is, I will hate him, Heb. 10. 38. and pour out the full Vials of my Wrath upon him. And truly 'tis no Wonder, if God, in a special Manner, testify his Displeasure against Apostates; for they bring the greatest Disgrace upon Religion. They make the righteous Ways of the Lord to be evil spoken of. They discourage others from following a religious Course of Life, and they harden and encourage wicked Men in their profane Courses. And therefore let me obtest and beseech you, as you love your Souls, as you value the Favour of God, as you regard the Interest and Credit of Religion, and as you would not have the Blood of other Men upon your Heads, See that you walk circumspectly, and be holy in all Manner of Conversation. Beware of every Sin, and especially beware of such Sins

Sins as you have formerly wallowed in: Let your Behaviour be every Way such as may be to the World a sufficient Evidence, that you really *have been with Jesus* on this Occasion.

So much for the Exhortation contain'd in the first Branch of my Text, *For sake the Foolish*. Let us next a little consider the encouraging Argument that's here adduced to persuade us to follow the Exhortation; which we have in these Words, *and live*.

The Meaning is, if ye indeed *for sake the Foolish*, and their Manner of Life, ye shall live a Life of solid Comfort and Peace now, a Life of real and substantial Delight, such as infinitely transcends all that the Pleasures of Sense can pretend to: Ye shall *live* a Life of blessed Safety under all the Dangers ye can be exposed to, because ye have forsaken the Way of the Foolish. And ye shall *live* a Life of eternal and inconceivable Felicity hereafter, such as *Eye hath not seen, Ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the Heart of Man to conceive* what, or how great it is. Men never begin truly to live, to live to any good Purpose, till they forsake their Sins, and mind the Concerns of their precious and never dying Souls; till then (to use the *Apostle's* Words) *they are dead in Trespasses and Sins*. 'Tis said concerning the Prodigal Son that *he* came to himself, so soon as he began seriously to resolve upon returning to his Father; because so long as he persever'd in his riotous Way of Living, he was in Truth no better than the Swine which he kept, and fain would have filled his Belly with the Husks they did eat.

Alter

Eph. 2. 1.

Luke 15.
17.

After he left his Father's House, he scarce ever in the least acted like a Man, nor exercised his reasonable Faculty, till he began to resolve upon a Change of Life, and to become a new Creature. How much sœver Men wallow in their sensual Delights, they are in a dead and lifeless Condition; for, in the Style of the Scriptures, *He that liveth in these Pleasures, is dead while he liveth.* The 6.

Meaning is, he is dead as to God, and all good Things; dead as to the Concerns of his Soul, and of another Life; dead as to all the Means and Exercises of a spiritual Life; and dead also as to all good Purposes, and truly differs but little from the Brute Creatures.

Or, if you please, these two Words [*and live*] may be taken for a Precept or Command: *For sake the Foolish and live*; that is, you must not only *for sake the Foolish*, but you must likewise *live*. You must not live in the Pleasures of the Flesh, for these war against the Soul, and destroy it; but you must live in the Service of God; and walk in his Ways, even in the Exercise of serious Religion; for they only that live so, live to Purpose: Only they live indeed, that live to God. Live not a meer animal Life, as the Brute Creatures do, who know no other End in living, but to gratify their Appetites: But now at length live the Life of Men and of Christians; live a Life of Holiness, Sobriety and Righteousness, and in a Word, live Spiritually, and ye shall live Eternally.

Alas! How many among us live at such a Rate of Sensuality, and the Neglect of their Souls, as is truly a Reproach to 'em considered

sidered as *Men* ; but 'tis doubly reproachful to 'em considering them as *Christians*, for so they are by Profession. How many are there, who behave themselves, as if the sole End of their Being had been to *eat* and *drink*, and *sleep*, and *recreate themselves* ? These four remarkable Incidents make up the whole History of their Lives. Such miserable Wretches deserve to be ranked among the Brutes, rather than among Men : Or if they must needs be ranked among Men, because they have reasonable Souls, truly I should be inclin'd to rank 'em among Pagans, much rather than Christians, because they have so very little even of the Shew of Religion. They dishonour God, they disgrace the Christian Religion, they degrade their Nature, they ruine their precious Souls, and they really disappoint themselves. I beseech you tell me, what are all the Pleasures of Sense, with which you so much delight to glut your selves ? They are only such as you have in common with the Beasts ; and I would not have you to put your selves upon a Level with them. And moreover, in the Beasts the Senses are more exquisite than in Man, and consequently they have their sensual Delights in a higher Degree ; nor are their Pleasures liable to the Correctives of Reason and Conscience as ours are. So that in Truth, the Pleasures of Sense are far below us, as we are *Men* ; and they are much more so as we are *Christians*. I beseech you therefore, forsake these brutal Pleasures, and follow a Course of serious Religion, wherein you'll be sure to meet with Abundance of Pleasures, that are much more
manly

manly and desirable, and every way adapted and suited to the rational, as well as the renewed Soul. If you set your selves seriously to the Study and Exercise of Religion, you will find such ravishing Delights in it, as will enhance all your Satisfaction, and make you no more relish the dull and insipid Pleasures of the Flesh. For sure I am, the Flesh cannot vye with the Spirit, nor can Sin compete with Holiness, in Point of Pleasure, or in any other Respect whatsoever.

And thus I have finished what I intended to say from the first Branch of my Text, and proceed to consider the Second, wherein I told you, *Wisdom* having taken us off from the wrong Way, endeavours to set us in the right Way: *And go in the Way of Understanding.* Two Things are necessary to be explained here; namely, what is the *Way of Understanding*, and what it is to *go in this Way*. In one Word then, by the *Way of Understanding*, I humbly conceive, is intended the Way of practical Religion and Godliness. And here I hope it can't be amiss that I lay before you an Account of some of these Denominations under which the Spirit of God in Scripture points out to us the Way of practical Religion. This will yield us a double Advantage: For 'twill at once let us see what this Way of Understanding is, and that 'tis really our Interest that we walk in it. And,

First, It is sometimes called the good Way. Hence Samuel tells the *Israelites*, that he would teach them the good and righteous Way. See to this Purpose a Passage in Solomon's Prayer at the Dedication of the Temple. Then hear
N then

1 Sam. 12.
23.

1 Kings 8.
36.

thou in Heaven, (says he) and forgive the Sin of thy Servants and of thy People Israel, that thou teach them the good Way wherein they should walk. Now the Way of serious Religion is called the *good Way* upon a twofold Account.

(1.) Because all good Men walk in this Way, and delight in it. Read the Scriptures from Beginning to End, and you'll not meet with so much as one good Man, that did not exercise himself unto Godliness. *Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Samuel, David, Josiah, Hezekiah,* and innumerable others of the Old Testament Saints walked in this good Way, *the Way of Understanding*: So did the Apostles, Evangelists, and infinite others of the New Testament Saints; they all walked in this Way. And these I have now mentioned are some of the wisest, the most excellent and illustrious Men that we can meet with in any History, nor can they be parallel'd. Surely then it should highly recommend Religion to us, that so many excellent Men, Men of a Character so bright and shining made it their Business and Study.

1 Tim. 4.
3.

(2.) 'Tis called the *good Way*, because it is, in every Respect, good and profitable to us to walk in it; whereas any other Way we can walk in, in all Respects, is hurtful, nay ruinous to us. Great every way, *is the Gain of Godliness*, for it has the *Promise of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come*. Religion brings Advantage to our Souls, and to our Bodies; to our selves and to our Posterity. Here we shall be sure of a competent Provision both of Food and Raiment: Here we shall be sure of the Divine Protection

on

on in all our Dangers, of the Divine Conduct in all our Difficulties, of the Divine Support in all our Afflictions and Trials, of the Divine Assistance in all our Temptations, and of the Divine Influences in all our religious Performances: Here we shall be sure of Justification, Adoption, Sanctification, Access to God, Nearness and Communion with him, Salvation in him, and every Thing tending both to our present Comfort, and future Happiness.

What can Men promise to themselves by *living and walking after the Flesh*,? What Profit can they expect to reap, by *walking in a Way that is not good*? Nay they will thereby draw down upon themselves all Manner of Mischiefs and Misery and they will bring Ruin upon their Posterity: *For the Face of the Lord is set against them that do evil, to cut off their Remembrance from the Earth.* Psal. 34. 16. How sad is their Case who walk in such a Way, as they can't but have their Maker their Enemy, and that have Omnipotence engaged against 'em? But as for such as walk in the good Way of the Lord, that Way which he hath prescribed; God will be daily loading them with his tender Mercies and Favours: *For he blesteth the Habitation of the Just.* Prov. 3. 33. His Ears shall be always open to their Cries, and he will on every Occasion, afford them what Succour is needful for them. In one Word, they that go in this Way of Understanding, God will *give them Grace and Glory, and no good Thing will he withhold from them.* Psal. 84. 11.

Secondly, Sometimes it is called the *old Way*, that is, the Way wherein all the People of

God, from the Beginning, have walked. All the *Patriarchs, Prophets*, and the whole Train of the Old Testament Believers; together with the *Apostles, Evangelists, Martyrs*, and the whole Multitude of the New Testament Saints walked in the Way of serious Godliness. Neither is there any other Way to Heaven, but this: For can it be expected that ever we shall get there in any other Way than that wherein all they that have gone to Heaven before us have walked? *Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the Way and see, and ask for the old Paths, where is the good Way and walk therein; and ye shall find rest to your Souls, &c.* As if he had said, ask your Fathers, and ask the Elders, and you shall find that the Way of Godliness and Righteousness hath evermore been the Way that God hath own'd and bless'd, and in which Men have prosper'd. *Ask for the old Paths*: That is, the Paths prescribed by the Law of God, the written Word, the only Standard of Antiquity. Ask for the Paths that the Patriarchs travel'd in before you; and as ye hope to inherit the Promises made to them, tread in their Steps: You'll find this both a pleasant and easy Way, a Way wherein ye shall enjoy both God and your selves, a Way wherein you shall be sure to travel in good Company.

Thirdly, 'Tis sometimes called the *Way of God*. To this Purpose David says, *Teach me thy Way O Lord*. Now the Way of serious Godliness is called the Way of God, I suppose, for these three Reasons,

(1.) Because it is the Way that God hath pointed out to us in his Word, and commanded

manded us to walk in it. *Thou hast com-* Psal. 119.
manded us to keep thy Precepts diligently. I say,^{4.}
 this Way is pointed out to us by God him-
 self, who, we are sure, can neither mis-
 lead nor deceive us: For he is infinite in
 Knowledge, Wisdom, Holiness, and Faithful-
 ness. O how thankful should we be, that
 he hath been graciously pleased to point out
 our Way to us? For if he had not done
 so, what had become of us? Or what Course
 could we have taken? Verily we had wan-
 dered in eternal Mazes, and had never been
 able to find out the Way to be happy. No-
 thing should more recommend Religion to us
 than this, that it is taught by God himself,
 who, as he requires nothing of us, but what
 is good in it self, and both necessary and pro-
 fitable to us; so he has forbidden us no-
 thing, but what is evil in itself, and hurtful to
 us.

(2.) Because it is a Way wherein we shall
 be sure to have God walking with us. *But* Psal. 4. 2.
know that the Lord hath set apart him that is
Godly for himself, &c. That is, he hath cho-
 sen the godly Man as one in whom he great-
 ly delighteth, and will shew daily Favaur to
 above all others. Would you then live in a
 blessed Society and Neighbourhood with the
 ever blessed God? And would you have
 Nearness and Communion with him? Here's
 the only, and indeed the infallible Way to it:
Exercise your selves constantly unto Godliness,
 and you shall not, you cannot miss of it.
 God will keep up a friendly Correspondence
 with you: Your Enemies shall be his E-
 nemies, and *they that touch you,* so as to do
 N 3 you

you any Hurt, he will look upon them, and deal with them, as if they *touched the Apple of his Eye*. To live near God must needs be the most pleasant and desireable Life imaginable; for it is to have a Heaven upon Earth.

(3.) Because 'tis the Way that will certainly bring us to the eternal and immediate Enjoyment of God in Heaven; for *the Mouth of the Lord hath spoken it*. Religion not only brings us near God now, and keeps us near God; but 'twill at long-run bring us so near him, that we shall be put beyond a Possibility of being separated from him for ever. Who then, that consults his own Interest, would not make Religion his chief Study?

Fourthly, Sometimes 'tis called the Way of Holiness. *And an High-way shall be there, and a Way, and it shall be called the Way of Holiness: The Unclean shall not pass over it.* The Way of Holiness is that Course of religious Duties, and of a blameless Conversation, wherein Men ought to walk, and press forward with an Eye to the Glory of God, and our own Felicity in the Enjoyment of him. The Scripture assures us, that *without Holiness no Man shall see* (that is, enjoy) *the Lord*. No Man, let him be what he will, let him profess what he will, let him do what he will, shall ever see the Face of God in Mercy, if he want Holiness: *He shall never enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*; but shall be eternally shut out, eternally banished from the Presence of the Lord, and have his everlasting Abode with the Devil and his Angels, *in the Lake that burneth with Fire and Brimstone* for ever more. There can be no Religion

Isa. 35. 8.

Heb. 12.
14.

gion in the Heart, where the Life is not holy and blameless. Devotion towards God, Charity, Righteousness and Mercy towards Man, and Sobriety with respect to our selves is what God requires of us: In these consists true Religion, neither can there be any Religion, where any of these is wanting.

Fifthly, 'Tis likewise sometimes called the *Way of Righteousness*. Hence the Apostle Peter ^{2 Pet. 2.} speaks of some, *who having known the Way* ^{21.} *of Righteousness, did turn from the holy Commandment*. Practical Religion and Godliness is called the Way of Righteousness, because it obliges us to nothing, but what is just and righteous in it self; neither indeed can it be otherwise, because 'tis dictated and prescribed to us by him who is infinite in Wisdom and Justice. Whatsoever he wills us to do, 'tis just that we should do it, and whatsoever he wills us to forbear, 'tis just that we should forbear it: Neither can we neglect any Thing that he has commanded, nor do any Thing he has forbidden us, without being guilty of a manifest Breach of the Law of Righteousness. All that God requires of us, is manifestly for our Advantage, and all that he forbids us, is evidently prejudicial to us in all our Interests, as I might shew you at Length, by an Induction of Particulars; were such a Task needful.

For judge, I pray you, is it not most just that we should *worship the Lord our God*, since 'tis in him we live, move, and have our Being? And is it not most just that we should serve him in the same Duties that he has prescribed; and with the same Dispositions of Mind that

he requires of us? Is it not most just, that we should reverence the *holy and dreadful Name of God*, and not profane it? Is it not most just that we should carefully sanctify the Sabbath, since 'tis the Day that he hath set apart for his own Worship? Is it not most just that Children should honour and obey their Parents? Is it not most just that we should carefully abstain from Murder, Adultery, Whoredom, Theft, Rapine, Perjury, Covetousness, and the like Abominations? For if these Vices were tolerated, 'twere utterly impossible to live peaceably in the World, and to maintain the Tranquillity even of human Society; but all things would quickly be turned to Blood and Confusion. And who can compute the fatal and direful Mischiefs that would infallibly ensue.

Every Thing in Religion then is exactly consonant to the eternal Rules and Principles of Good and Evil: Every Thing here correspondeth with the Counsels of God, and with the sound Reason of Man. All the Precepts of our holy Religion are exactly as they shou'd be, and there is no Mistake, no Crookedness nor Injustice in 'em, or in any of them. All the Precepts of our most holy Religion are so just in themselves, and so exactly adapted, and calculated for our Profit, that, in imposing 'em upon us, 'tis plain, God hath not so much exercised his Sovereignty over us as he hath demonstrated his Kindness to us: Neither are they more a Declaration of his Will, than they are an Argument of his good Will towards us. You'll see how cordially *David* gives in his Suffrage for the Justice of the

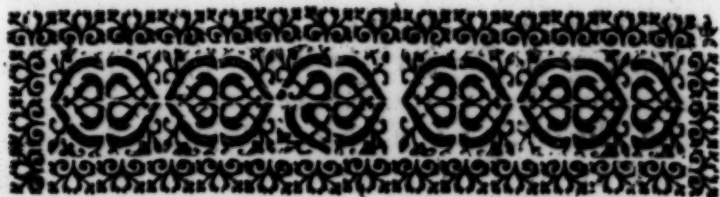
SERM. VII. *of Understanding.*

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the whole Body of the Divine Law in general,
and for every one of these Laws in particular,
whilst he says, *Therefore I esteem all thy Precepts* psal. 119.
concerning all Things to be right. So that you 128.
see, there's all the Reason in the World,
why the Way of practical Religion is called
the Way of Righteousness. *Gal. 6. 16.* And
as many as walk according to this Rule, Peace
be on them, and Mercy, and upon the Israel of
God; to whom be eternal Praises. Amen.



SER-



SERMON VIII.

Of the great Advantage of
walking in the Ways of
Understanding.

PROV. ix. 6.

*Forsake the Foolish and live; and go in
the Way of Understanding.*

THere are two Things among many others, wherein the great Goodness of God towards us shines forth most brightly and illustriously: The one is his laying down such admirable Precepts for the Government of our Lives; and the other is, his inviting and courting us to an exact Observation of those Rules by so many encouraging Promises. For by the First of these he has made Religion plain and easy; and by the other he has made it both pleasant and profitable to us. I assure you very much depends upon our Conversati-
on

on in the World: For altho' indeed the best ordered Conversation imaginable will not, cannot merit Heaven; because, *when we have done all we can*, we must both acknowledge and believe *we are but unprofitable Servants*, and come far short of our Duty: Yet according to the Way we now walk in, so will it be with us for ever in the World to come. If we walk in the Way of the Foolish, unthinking Part of Mankind, spending our Time and Strength in Vanity, indulging our selves in our sensual Delights, pampering our Lusts, and fulfilling them; and in the mean Time neglecting the Concerns of our precious Souls; we will find these Things to be Bitterness in the End: Whereas, if we go in the *Way of Understanding*; if we mind the Business of serious Religion, *walking in all God's Commandments and Ordinances blameless*; if we are careful to acquaint our selves with the Almighty, to please him in all Things, to mortify our Corruptions, to die daily unto Sin, and live unto Righteousness, and to mind *the Things that belong to our Peace*: In this Case, we shall, at the End of our Time, *receive the End of our Faith, and Hope, and Holiness, even the Salvation of our Souls*.

After I had, in the foregoing Discourse, a little open'd up and apply'd the first Branch of the Text, I entered upon the Consideration of the Second; and having observed, that by *the Way of Understanding* is here intended the Way of practical Religion, I came to give you some Account of the various Denominations under which the Spirit of God in Scripture, points out this *Way* to us; and I spoke

spoke to five of 'em. I shall not resume any further what has been already delivered, but proceed to some other Things. And therefore,

Sixthly, The Way of practical Religion is sometimes called the *Way of Life*: According to that of the wise Man Solomon. For the
 Prov. 6. *Commandment is a Lamp, and the Law is Light,*
 23. *and the Reproofs of Instruction are the Way of Life.* Practical Religion is called the *Way of Life* upon a double Account.

(1.) Because Men never truly begin to live till they first begin to be seriously Religious. So long as we are without Religion, we are void of a Principle of a new and spiritual Life, having no other Life but what the Beasts of the Field have, even a mere brutal animal Life. We indeed once had Life, namely, when *Adam* was in a State of Innocence; but by his Fall we lost that Life. However Religion is restoring us to Life again: And therefore 'tis certainly the greatest Good, and the greatest Happiness we are capable of in this World. But O how miserable is the Condition of those that are void of Religion! For they are really dead as to every Thing that is substantially good; and if they die in that woful State, 'tis not possible to describe how extremely deplorable their Condition shall be; for they shall die eternally.

(2.) Because eternal Life is the Reward of serious Religion: and a glorious Reward it will be; well worth all the Pains and Labour we can be at in obtaining it. Alas! the Madness of those that indulge themselves in their natural Aversion to Religion; tho' Godli-
 nest

ness is undoubtedly their great, and, I may say, their only *Gain*. What is there wanting in Religion to recommend it to you? Or what is there in the Service of Satan, and of your Lusts, or in the Drugery of the World, that ye should be so loth to quit them? What Hurt has Religion done you, or what Hurt can it do you? Will the Devil, or the World, or your Lusts be better to you than God? Let the Devil or your wicked and carnal Hearts suggest the worst they can of Religion, it shall never justify your Neglect or Contempt of it.

Seventhly, 'Tis sometimes called the *Way of Psal. 119.*
Truth. I have chosen the Way of Truth, says 30.
David. All other Ways that Men walk in besides this, are the Ways of Error; and they will lose and undo themselves that walk in them. The Devil that old Serpent, that cunning Impostor, but deceives and misleads Men, when he draws them out of the *Way of Understanding*. And is it not our Part to look well to our selves, that we become not a Prey to this devouring Lion? Or, are we such very Fools as to think he will not hurt us? What are they doing that neglect Religion? I assure you they are all the Time they do this, in a Plot and Concert with the Devil to ruin themselves. Let me therefore obtest and beseech you, in the Bowels of Jesus Christ, and by all the Regard you are bound to have for your precious and immortal Souls that ly at Stake, to consider what you are doing: Cast off your unjust and unreasonable Prejudices against Religion, and look to your selves while 'tis yet called to Day. Neither must you halt between
two

two Opinions unresolv'd what to do; but presently fall in with the gracious Calls and Offers of the Gospel, while *there is yet Hope in Israel concerning you.* The Door is now standing open, and therefore hasten to enter in; for you know not how soon the Door may be shut upon you, and then you are undone. *Let us therefore fear lest a Promise being left us of entering into his Rest, any of us should come short of it.*

Heb. 4. 1.

Eighthly, Sometimes 'tis called the *Way of Understanding.* You see 'tis called so in the Text. They that walk with God in their Generation; living in the Exercise of serious Religion, have a true Judgment, and a right Understanding of Things; they understand their true Interest. As for wicked and profane Men, *whose Eyes the God of this World hath blinded,* they neither see the Excellency nor Advantage of Religion, and therefore refuse to go in this Way: But all whose Eyes the Lord hath anointed with his Eye-salve, see the Beauty of Holiness, and are fully perswaded of the great Gain of Godliness; and therefore they constantly exercise themselves in it. I say then, serious Religion is the Way wherein Men of true Understanding, that know their true Interest walk. Indeed the profane Part of Mankind reckon them stark Fools that mind the Business of Religion; but this proceeds from their Ignorance and want of Discerning: But a Time is coming when they shall be of another Mind, tho' 'twill be too late. I would therefore have ye considering Things better in Time; for I assure, 'tis only your Ignorance

rance and Misapprehensions of Religion, that makes you think so harshly of it.

I beseech you all to consider the great Danger of walking in the Ways of the Foolish; for if you should die in that Course of Life, what would become of you? Verily you would be lost for ever: Therefore hasten out of that cursed and dangerous Way, and *turn your Feet speedily into the Way of God's Testimonies, that so Iniquity may not be your Ruin.* How much soever some Men set up for a more than ordinary refin'd Taste of Things, and a deeper Insight and Understanding than others, yet if they neglect Religion, they are the most absolute Fools in Nature, perfectly void of Understanding. There is a Generation of such Fools in the World, that will needs have the Reputation of the Wits of the Age they live in, who yet have the least Pretensions to it of any, unless we reckon, (as it seems they do) that good Sense and Learning consists in turning every Thing that's sacred and sober, into Banter and Ridicule. How justly may I apply the Words of the *Apostle* to them? *Professing themselves 1 Cor. 1. to be Wise, they become Fools.* Whatsoever Men 22. of profane Spirits and dissolute Lives pretend, the Alwise God, the God of Truth hath said unto Man, *The Fear of the Lord, that is Wis Job 28. dom; and to depart from Evil, is Understand- 28. ing.* To be truly Religious, is to be truly Wise: And as the Wisdom of God appears in the Institution of Religion, so does the Wisdom of Man appear in the Practice and Observation of it. Nothing doth so truly guide our Way, and gain our End, as Religion.

The

The next Thing in the Method is to shew you, what it is to go in the *VVay of Understanding*. And in a Word, it is to exercise our selves constantly unto Godliness. But more particularly, it implies these few Things:

First, A punctual and devout Performance of every religious Duty; such as Prayer, reading the Scriptures, hearing the Word preached, Singing of Psalms, spiritual Meditation, Self-examination, Communicating, and the like. None of these must on any Account be neglected in their proper Season; nor must they be performed in a Hurry, but with Deliberation, and serious Devotion. Let worldly Affairs be never so pressing, they must not cause us to neglect any Part of our Duty to God; for God is to be served above all, and before all: Neither must we serve him in a careless and indifferent Manner, but with the whole Heart. In every Duty we should serve God with the united Powers of the Soul: For the Service of God's House requires the Employment of the whole Man. As for Example, when we sing *Psalms*; it must be so, as to make sweet Melody in our Hearts unto the Lord: When we pray, it should be with Fervency of Affections, with Earnestness of Desires, with Presence of Mind, with Compolure of Thought, with Humility of Heart, and with a lively Faith to be heard for the Sake of Christ: When we read or hear the Word, it should be with Meekness, with Reverence, with Faith, with Attention, and a Desire of receiving Instruction. We

1 Pet. 2. should evermore, (to use the Apostle Peter's Words) *As new born Babes, desire the sincere Milk*

Milk of the Word, that we may grow thereby.
 And when we communicate, it should be with Hearts enlarged to bless God for his unspeakable Kindness to us, and with Hearts inflamed with Love to Christ for laying down his precious Life a Ransom for us: It should be with Brokenness of Heart for our Sins, and an utter Renunciation of them; it should be with a cheerful and unlimited Resignation of our selves to him, solemnly obliging our selves to do our whole Work and Duty as Christians better for the future. The like may be said of all the other Duties which our holy Religion binds us to.

Secondly, It implies a Behaviour, in every Respect, becoming God's professing People: Or, to speak with the *Apostle, Paul*, it is to *walk worthy of the Vocation wherewith we are called.* It is to behave our selves, in every Case, so as Religion may not suffer on our Account: For the Interest and Credit of the Gospel is what every one of us should have much upon his Heart. I assure you, nothing doth more grieve the Spirit of God, nor harden the Hearts of the Wicked; nothing doth more disgrace Religion, nor lay a greater Stumbling-block in the Way of it, than the profane Lives of such as profess to be God's People: And this is to wound Religion in the House of her Friends. I beseech you therefore, let us all study to be holy and without Reproof in the World: *Only let your* Eph. 4. 1
Conversation be as becometh the Gospel of Christ. Philip. 1
 We all bear the glorious Title and Character of Christians, professing our selves to be the Disciples and Followers of the holy Jesus;
 O let

- let us then adorn the Doctrine of God our Saviour in all Things: Let us study so to behave ourselves as that we may, with the Apostle Paul,
- Acts 24. 16. *always have Consciences void of Offence both toward God and toward Man.* And the greater Profession of Religion any of us have, we are so much the more bound to be *holy and*
- 1 Pet. 2. 12. *without Blame. Having your Conversation honest among the Gentiles: That whereas they speak against you as Evil-doers, they may by your good Works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the Day of Visitation.* It concerns us all to be often putting that Question to our selves,
- Matth. 5. 47. *What do we more than others? Wherein do we live above the Rate of the Children of this World? Are not many Professors carnal and worldly, and in many Things behave themselves below the Character, and in a Way that is inconsistent with the Profession and*
- 2 Tim. 2. 19. *Calling of Christians? We name the Name of Christ, (that is, we profess his Name, and we are called by his Name) and therefore let us depart from Iniquity: Let us look upon our selves as strictly bound to avoid every Thing that's inconsistent with the holy Christian*
- Tit. 2. 14. *Profession; especially considering, that Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purchase to himself a peculiar People, zealous of good Works.*

Thirdly, It implies a faithful and conscientious Performance of all our Relational Duties. Besides the Duties of our general Calling, as we are Christians, all of us have the Duties of our particular Callings and Relations to perform; whether we are Parents or Children, Husbands or Wives, Masters or Servants

vants, Magistrates or Subjects, Ministers or private Christians: Neither can we be said to walk in the *Way of Understanding*, or to deserve the Character of Christians, or to *exercise our selves unto Godliness*, if we are negligent in our Relational Duties. See how careful and conscientious *David* was this Way: *I will walk within my House* (says he) *with a* Pfal. 101. *perfect Heart; O when wilt thou come unto* ^{2.} *me.* This holy Man is declaring here, not only how he resolved to behave himself in his publick Station and Capacity, while he was on the Throne, but how he would walk within his House, where he considered, that tho' he was much out of the View of the World, yet he was still under the Eye of God. It is not enough that we put on a Shew of Religion when we are Abroad, and in the Company of others; but we must govern our selves by it in our Families, and in all our Family Relations.

I shall here observe to you three Things concerning this excellent Man's Government of his Family; wherein I heartily wish every one of us may have the Grace to follow his truly pious and laudable Example: And I hope you'll easily excuse me, if I enlarge a little upon these Heads; because, I assure you, in these particular Instances there lies a great deal of Religion, providing they are done from a right Principle, and directed to a right End. And,

(1.) When *David* took up House, he gave God many serious and pressing Invitations to come and keep House with him: *O when wilt thou come unto me:* As if he had said; I can

never think to live with any Pleasure in my House, or have any Comfort in my earthly Enjoyments, unless thou be graciously pleased to come and dwell with me; that alone will sweeten all my Blessings, nay, and it will sweeten all my Crosses too. Some of you have kept House long; let me ask you this Question, Did you ever invite God seriously into your Houses? No doubt but you have some Care to have your Houses well furnished and provided, and made convenient for your selves. But have you prepared a Habitation for God in your Houses? 'Tis like you have sometimes desired your Neighbours and Friends to visit you: But did you ever desire a Visit from God? How many pressing Invitations have you given him? Have you ever said, *O when wilt thou come unto me?* How can you think your selves safe in your Houses unless God dwell with you? Or, what Comfort can you expect in all your Creature Enjoyments without him.

O how pleasant a Thing is it, to have God keeping House, and dwelling with us! I'm sure you can never have a Guest in your Houses so well worth the entertaining: Let me therefore obtest every one of you to give God earnest Invitations to come and dwell with you. I assure you, he wants nothing but a hearty Invitation, and 'tis what he waits for: For he never refused to come into an House where he was seriously invited: He will come into the poorest Cottage in the World, if he is really desired. And the true, and indeed the only Way to bring God into your Houses is, to get him first into your Hearts.

Hearts. He is standing at the Doors of your Houses, and at the Door of your Hearts, and saying to you as once he said to the Church of *Laodicea*, *Behold I stand at the Door and knock: If any Man will hear my Voice and open the Door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me.* You see he desires no more on your Part, but only that you open the Door to him; and then he will come into your Hearts, and he will come into your Houses: And O how blessed is that Heart, and how blessed is that House, where the All-sufficient and ever blessed God dwells! You had far better dwell in the meanest Cottage in all the Land; nay, you had far better dwell in a Prison, or in a dark and loathsome Dungeon, and have God dwelling with you there; than to dwell in the most magnificent and best furnished Palace in the World, without him.

(2.) *David* not only worshipped God in his Closet, but in his Family. The thirtieth *Psalms* bears this remarkable Title or Inscription, *A Psalm or Song at the Dedication of the House of David.* This holy Man, it seems, dedicated his House to God, to be, as it were, a little Sanctuary or Church: He solemnly committed himself, his Family, and all his Family-Concerns to the Divine Grace and Conduct; and he devoted himself, and all his to the Glory of God, both in the Duties of Family-Worship, and in all the Instances of a holy Conversation. When *David* had brought up the Ark of God from the House of *Obed-Edom*, (where it had remained for some Time) into his own City;

having returned solemn Thanks to God for this Mercy, in the Presence of all the Congregation of *Israel*, we are told, *He returned to bless his Household.* Tho' he had both *Prophets* and *Priests*, and *Levites* in Abundance about him, to be his *Chaplains*, yet he did not devolve that Work upon them, but did it himself : *He blessed his Household.* A noble Pattern worthy of every Man's Imitation.

You'll find the Apostle *Paul* making most honourable Mention of *Aquila* and *Priscilla*, and the Church of God which was in their House. He compares their House to a little Church or Congregation, because of the comely Order of God's Worship that was constantly kept up among them. And you'll find the Spirit of God in Scripture, ranking such Families as neglect the Worship of God, among Pagans, and devoting them to the same De-

struction. *Pour out thy Fury upon the Heathen, that know thee not, and upon the Families that call not upon thy Name.* The Curse of God hangs over every Family that calls not on him; and may, for ought you know, every Moment be poured out upon you : For what is there, but the Long-suffering of God to keep it off? And who knows how soon that may be at an End, with respect to you?

Solomon tells us, *The Curse of the Lord is upon the House of the Wicked, but he bleisseth the Habitation of the Just.* Would you then have God showering down his rich Blessings, from the one End of the Year to the other, upon your Persons, upon your Families, and upon all your other Concerns? Here's the certain Way to it : Seek God seriously in your Closets

Closets and seek him in your Families. But if you neglect these, you have no Ground to expect any Thing but the Curse of God upon your Persons and upon your whole Concerns.

(3.) Another Thing remarkable in *David's* Government of his Family was, his singular and pious Care to entertain none in his House that were graceless and profane, how serviceable soever they might be to him, in his secular Concerns: He would have none to serve him, but such as he thought were virtuously and religiously disposed, and had a regular Conversation. *Mine Eyes shall be upon the Faithful in the Land, that they may dwell with me: He that walketh in a perfect Way, he shall serve me. He that worketh Deceit shall not dwell in my House: He that telleth Lies shall not tarry in my Sight.* You see his Resolution was to keep no bad Men for his Servants, nor to keep any about him that were Vicious; he will not converse with them, nor admit them into his Company or the Company of his Children and Servants, lest they should spread the Infection of Sin in his Family, but he will chuse those only to serve him, who were most eminent for Piety and Religion.

Many People, providing they can but get such to serve them as they think will do their Business, they seek for no other Quality in them, not caring whether they be religiously or vitiously disposed: Nay, some care not how graceless they are. How many can hear their Servants swear, and can see them drunk, and profane the Lord's Day,

and perhaps never so much as once find fault with them, or reprove them for these Things, if they but do their Work diligently and carefully? This is for a Lamentation, and should be for a Lamentation: And what a Reproach is this to the holy Christian Profession? But I pray you, how can you think your selves safe? Or how can you expect your worldly Affairs will prosper in the Hands of those that are the Devil's Servants? How can you imagine they will be faithful to you, that are so unfaithful to God? How can such a Thought enter into your Minds as that they will be faithful to you and careful of your Concerns, who are so negligent in the great Concerns of their own Souls? 'Twere very proper for People to be often and seriously reflecting upon that memorable saying of *Solomon*, wherein he observes to us, that

Prov. 21. *even the plowing of the Wicked is Sin.* And
4. no Wonder it should be so, since he elsewhere

Prov. 15. *assures us, that their Sacrifices are an Abomi-*
8. *nation to the Lord.* How then can you expect any Comfort in that Labour or Work which, you may be sure (if you'll believe the Scriptures of Truth) is an Offence unto God? We may reasonably conclude, that they who are faithful to God, and careful in the Concerns of their own Souls, will be most faithful to us, and careful of our Affairs. The *Patriarch Abraham*, who made it his Business to instruct, not only his Children, but his Servants in the Fear of God, reap'd the comfortable Fruits of his Care; you have a notable Instance of this in the Steward of his House, *Eliexer of Damascus*, who had the

Manage-

Management of all his Affairs, which he managed with the utmost Faithfulness, and to the great Advantage of his Master.

Fourthly, To go in the Way of Understanding implies likewise, a serious Concern to behave our selves as becomes Religion, under the various Administrations of the Divine Providence we daily meet with, both with Respect to our Souls and Bodies. Our Lives in this World are chequer'd with almost an infinite Variety of Changes and Vicissitudes: Scarce many Days pass over us wherein we meet not with some one Change or other, and sometimes these Changes are very remarkable, and have no small Influence upon us. We are sometimes in Sicknefs, and sometimes in Health; sometimes in Honour, and sometimes in Disgrace; sometimes in Plenty, and sometimes in Poverty; sometimes we have many to befriend us, and sometimes we have few or none to own us; sometimes every Thing we take in Hand succeeds according to our Desire, and sometimes again we meet with nothing but melancholy Disappointments: In this World we are tossed to and fro, and even they whose Lives are most free from Troubles and Crosses, may give the same Account of their Lives which the holy Patriarch *Jacob* gave of his; *Few and evil* Gen. 47. *have the Days of the Years of my Life been, &c.* 9. And doubtless it requires no small Stock of spiritual Wisdom and Understanding, to manage our selves equally, and with a becoming Disposition of Mind, amidst such a continual Variety of Changes and Revolutions in our Circumstances: Nor does any Thing
more

more convincingly discover a Man's Wisdom than a right and even Behaviour under every Condition of Life he is in. To have an equal Frame of Mind under an unequal Administration of Providence, certainly argues a great deal of solid Wisdom and Understanding: Whereas, if we are soon shaken in our Minds upon every Turn in our Affairs that Providence thinks fit to measure out to us, 'twill discover our Wisdom to be but very inconsiderable. *If thou faint in the Day of Adversity (says Solomon) thy Strength is but small.*

Prov. 24.
10.

Psal. 73.
24.

Phil. 4.
12, 13.

I confess indeed, if the Conduct of Divine Providence were to keep always the same Tenor towards us, upon this Supposition it would be no great Difficulty for us to learn how to carry our selves: But, I say, our Lives being so much composed of Changes, this makes it the more difficult for us to behave our selves suitably. However, they that make Religion their chief Business, are taught of God, how to demean themselves on every Occasion, for *he guides them with his Counsel.* In all their Difficulties God makes their Way plain and patent to them, and strengthens them to bear every Burden. *Paul knew both how to be abased, and how to abound: Every where, and in all Things he was instructed, both to be full, and to be hungry, both to abound, and to suffer Need. Nay, I can do all Things (says he) through Christ which strengtheneth me.* Now he that put so much spiritual Wisdom and Strength in Paul, can and will put as much in the weakest of us, if we but seriously ask it from him, for he's the

the same God Almighty and All-sufficient now that he was then. You'll see how much our blessed Saviour has encouraged us to ply the Throne of Grace for every Thing we want. *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh, receiveth: And he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.* Matt. 7. 8. To the same Purpose speaks the Apostle James, when he says, *If any Man lack Wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all Men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.* Jam. 1. 5. If we know not how to carry on any emergent Difficulty, let us ply the Throne of Grace hard, and we shall be graciously received. If we want Wisdom to manage our selves, either in a State of Prosperity or Adversity, God can help us to it: So that if we want that Understanding whereof I speak, 'tis truly our own Blame allenarly.

I shall now shut up all in a Word of Exhortation. Let me therefore from hence obtest and beseech all of you, in the Bowels of Jesus Christ to follow the Advice given you in the Text, *Forsake the Foolish and live, and go in the Way of Understanding.* To excite you to this, I desire you may seriously ponder these following Particulars.

(1.) If you do so, you shall have glorious Titles conferr'd upon you: For ye shall be called and reckoned the Friends of God. Our Saviour says to his Disciple, *Ye are my Friends,* Joh. 15. *if ye do whatsoever I command you.* And if 14. God be your Friend, you may expect many a friendly Visit from him, and that he will keep

Pfal. 55.
22.

keep up a constant and friendly Correspondence with you: If God be your Friend, you need not much care who are your Enemies, nor how much the World hate you; for he will stand by you, he will support you, he will espouse your Cause against all that shall oppose you, and your Enemies shall be his Enemies; *For he shall never suffer the Righteous to be moved.* He is such a Friend as will be nearer to you than a Brother, and infinitely more useful to you than all your Friends in the World can be; for he will stand by you when no other can do you Service: When your Eye-strings begin to break, and your Souls are just going to lanch forth into the boundless Ocean of Eternity, what then will all your Friends in the World be able to do for you? But God both can and will do for you then, and will bring you safely to *Emmanuel's Land*, where you will soon forget all your Sorrow and Trouble. *Yea, (says David) tho' I walk through the Valley of the Shaddow of Death, I will fear no Evil: For thou art with me, &c.* Nay, though all your Friends in the World should, even in your Lifetime, desert you, God will never leave you nor forsake you. *When my Father and my Mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.* You shall not only be the Friends, but the Children of God, which is a Title more High and Glorious than the Former. And therefore the *Apostle*, writing to the believing *Galatians*, says, *For ye are all the Children of God by Faith in Jesus Christ.* And this is infinitely better, and more desirable than to be the Children, nay, the Heirs of the greatest Monarch

Pfal. 23.
4.

Pfal. 27.
10.

Gal. 5.25.

Monarch on Earth. And further, you shall have yet a more glorious Title confer'd upon you: Ye shall be the Heirs of God, even Heirs of an everlasting Kingdom, a Kingdom that fadeth not away; according to that remarkable Word of the Apostle: *And if Children, then Heirs; Heirs of God, and joint Heirs with Christ.* Rom. 8. 17.

(2.) You shall be dignified with glorious Relations; two of which I shall here condescend upon. (1.) If you go in the Way of Understanding, God will be a Father to you: For he will adopt you to himself in *Christ Jesus*. And if he be your Father, he will instruct you, he will lead you, and he will provide for you: So that you need take no Thought, (to use our blessed Saviour's Words) saying, *Matth. 6. 31, 32. what shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be cloathed? &c. For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these Things.* If he be your Father, he will protect you in all your Dangers, he will admit you to Nearness with himself, and he will, in Mercy to your Souls, graciously chastise you for your Faults, by the Means of which, ye shall be made more and more Partakers of his Holiness, which is the Design he has in all the fatherly Chastisements, wherewith he, at any Time, exerciseth his Children. (2.) God will not only be your Father, but your Husband; according to that of the Prophet *Isaiah, For thy Maker is thine Husband, the Lord of Hosts is his Name.* Heb. 12. 10. And see how he speaks to his People by another of the Prophets: *And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in Righteousness,* Isa. 54. 5. Hos. 2. 19, 20. and

and in Judgment, and in loving Kindness, and in Mercies; I'll even betroth thee to me in Faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord. And if he is your Husband, he will love you, he will cherish you, he will defend you, and he will confirm you in a lasting, yea in an everlasting Happiness; and he will perfect whatsoever concerns you.

(3.) You shall enjoy the highest Privileges that any Mortal can partake of, for you shall have God's Ear: He will be near unto you in all Things you call upon him for, and he will refuse you nothing you can ask from him, provided he sees it is good for you. Wereckon it no small Privilege to have the Ear of an earthly King, or even of some great Courtier about him: But 'tis a Privilege infinitely greater and more valuable, to have the Ear of him who is *King of Kings* and *Lord of Lords*. You shall have the gracious Presence of God with you whithersoever you go: For he has
 Heb. 13.5. said, *I will never leave thee nor forsake thee*. You shall have the right and sanctified Use of all Providences, and your Souls shall get good by even the worst Things you meet with. You shall have an Interest in all the Promises of his Word; these shall all be made good to your comfortable Experience. God hath often been better, he never was, and never will be worse than his Word to any of his People. You shall have an Interest in Christ's Intercession: He shall be your Advocate with the Father, to plead your Cause, to answer all the Accusations of *Satan* against you, and to procure Acceptance of all your Duties and Services. And to conclude, the Spirit shall be
 yours:

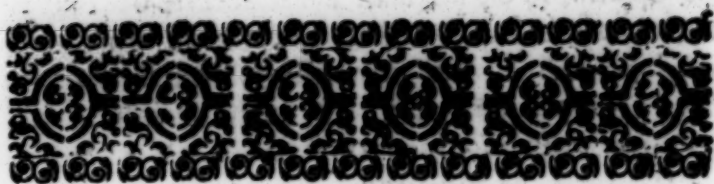
yours : Yours, I say, to help your Infirmities, whereby you may be enabled to cry *Abba*, Rom. 8. Father : To guide you in all your Ways, to lead^{15.} you into all Truth, to help your Infirmities, and^{Rom. 8. 26.} to make Intercession for you with Groanings which cannot be uttered. Yours to give you the Earnest of Eph. 4. 30. the promised Inheritance, and to seal you unto the Day of Redemption. May we not then conclude with the Psalmist David, and say, Happy is that People, that is in such a Case : Yea, Psal. 144. happy is that People, whose God is the Lord.^{15.} And who can describe, how great their Happiness is ? Neither Angels nor Men can do it sufficiently.

(4.) You shall be sufficiently intic'd to a most glorious Inheritance ; even the Inheritance of the Saints in Light. This is that Inheritance which the Apostle Peter, tells us, is incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not 1 Pet. 1. away, reserved in Heaven for you : That is, for^{4.} you that go in the Way of Understanding, where you shall rest from all your Labours, and never so much as see Trouble or Sorrow any more. This is that Rest which the Apostle tells us, is reserved for the People of God. Where Heb. 4. 9. you shall be infinitely more happy than Tongue can express, or Heart conceive. For you shall eternally drink of those Rivers of Psal. 36. Pleasures that are at God's right Hand for ever- 8, 9. more : For with him is the Fountain of Life. But I spoke to this Happiness already, in one of the preceeding Sermons, and therefore need say nothing further concerning it here, but refer the Reader to that Place.

And thus you see, how much Encouragement you have every way, to exercise your
selves

selves constantly unto Godliness : What remains for you to do is, speedily and heartily to fall in with the *Advice* given you in the Text ; *Forsake the Foolish and live ; and go in the Way of Understanding.* And so I conclude my Discourse upon this Text, with the Words of the Apostle to the *Hebrews*, Chap. xiii. ver. 20, 21. *Now the God of Peace, that brought again from the Dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the Blood of the everlasting Covenant, make you perfect in every good Work to do his Will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his Sight, through Jesus Christ ; to whom be Glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

SER-



SERMON IX.

Of walking with G O D.

GEN. V. 24.

And Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him:

THE particular View the Spirit of God seems to have, in those Characters he has given us of the Saints in Scripture is, at once to describe Religion, and recommend the Practice of it to us, for doubtless if that be true in general, which the Apostle somewhere observes, (as certainly it is) to wit, *That Rom. 15. whatsoever Things were written afore-time, were 4. written for our Learning*: Much more, are these particular Excellencies of the Saints, for which they are so highly applauded, in a special Manner instructive. Some of the Saints are noted for their Eminency in one Grace, and some of them for Excellency in another; as *Job* is commended for his Patience, *Moses* for his Meekness, *Phineas* for his Zeal, *Abraham*

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ham

ham for his Faith, &c. But here is one of the Saints, so eminent in the Exercise of every Grace, that 'tis hard to determine which of 'em he excelled most in. His Character, as it stands here, you see, is most bright and shining, pointing him out to us as a Saint of the first Magnitude; for concerning him 'tis said that *he walked with God, and he was not, for God took him*. In which Words there are two Things that deserve our Consideration.

(1.) His gracious Conversation in the World; which is most elegantly described to us under this Expression, *And Enoch walked with God*. That is, He lived a holy, sober, just, and righteous Life in the World; and that in some Degree of Eminency above others of the Saints and Servants of God that lived in these Times. Tho' the Age, in which he liv'd, grew exceeding corrupt, yet this holy Man was not carried away with the Streams of the Times, but carefully fram'd his Life according to the Will of God, with whom he had most sweet Communion. *He set the Lord continually before his Eyes, and sought to approve himself to him in every Thing*; in all his Ways acting like one that knew himself to be continually under the Observation of his All-seeing Eye. And so eminent was he for Piety in his Day, that he was in a Manner intirely dead to this World; not only walking after God, as all other good Men do, but he walked with God, as one that was in Heaven already. He lived above the Rate, not only of other Men, but of other Saints: Serious Religion was

was the Business of *Enoch's* Life; 'twas his constant and only Care, while he was in the World. While others liv'd to themselves, and to the World, he lived to God: Religion and Communion with God were, I may say, the Joy and Support of his Life, and better than Life it self to him. He lived so far above the World and the Enjoyments of Sense, that he, in some respect, lived in Heaven while he was upon Earth.

(2.) Here is *Enoch's* glorious Removal out of this World, into a better: *He was not, for God took him.* He lived so little in this World, and he lived so little like the rest of the World, that he did not die like them. His Stay in the World was but short, compared with the rest of the Anti-diluvian *Patriarchs*: *God took him*; he took him to himself from the World. He was too good for this World, and therefore *God took him* to Heaven, to be for ever with himself: His Life was too holy for a Life here on Earth; he was so much in Heaven already both in his Affections, his Desires and Conversation, that he was translated to be personally there. God and *Enoch* were like two familiar Friends and Intimates walking together: And because he took so much Delight in God's Acquaintance, God took him from all Acquaintance with Men. He was so taken with God that *God took him*; or (as the *Author* to the *Hebrews* has it) *he translated* Heb. 11. him. *Enoch* was before translated from Nature to Grace; and he prov'd so good a Proficient in that School, that he was soon translated from Grace to Glory, as it were *per saltum*, by a leap over the Grave: For he did

P 2

not

not see Death; from which sad Vision, the Scripture mentions but one more, that was excused before he was admitted to the Beatifical Vision, *Elijah* by Name.

Enoch was translated, when he had lived but Three hundred and sixty five Years, (an Year of Years, as one calls it) which, as Man's Age went then, was in the Midst of his Days: For there were none of the *Patriarchs* before the Flood, that did not more than double his Age. But why did God take him so soon? Surely it was because the World, which was now grown so corrupt, was not worthy of him: Or, because he was so much weary of the World; even so weary of it, as to desire a speedy Removal out of it: Or, because his Work here was done, and done the sooner for his minding it so closely. God often takes them soonest, whom he loves best; and the Time they lose on Earth, is gain'd in Heaven, to their unspeakable Comfort and Advantage. When *Enoch* was translated, it was not the Period of his Being, but only of his Being here. He was not found; so the *Apostle* expresses it in that forecited Place. He was not found by his Friends,

2 Kings 2.
17.

who perhaps sought him, as the Sons of the Prophets are said to have sought *Elijah*: Or, he was not found by his Enemies, who, as some think, were in Quest of him to put him to Death, in their Rage against him, for his eminent Piety and Zeal in reproving Vice. It appears by his Prophecy, which the *Apostle Jude* makes mention of, that there were then

Jude 15.

many ungodly Sinners, who spoke hard Speeches; and probably did hard Things against the

People

People of God. But God hid *Enoch* from 'em, not under Heaven but in Heaven; he took him Soul and Body to himself, into the heavenly Paradise, by the Ministry of Angels, as he afterwards took *Elijah*: And in his Translation, he was changed, as the Saints will be, that shall be found alive at Christ's second coming into the World. 1 Cor. 15

I have now done with the general Explanation of the Words, and shall next discourse more particularly from the first Branch of them, namely, *Enoch's* gracious Conversation in the World, pointed out to us under this Expression, *And Enoch walked with God*; which (thro' the Assistance of God) I shall prosecute in Manner following.

I. I shall explain something of the Nature of this walking, by considering the various Phrases which are used in holy Scripture in describing of it.

II. Enquire more particularly, what is implied in walking with God.

III. Give you some Account of the Properties of this walking.

IV. For Application, I shall lay down sundry Rules whereby we may be helped to walk with God in our Generation.

First, This walking is sometimes called, *A walking before God*. Thus you'll find God laying his Command upon *Abraham* to this Purpose, *And when Abraham was ninety Years old* Gen. 17, *and nine, the Lord appeared unto Abraham, and said unto him, I am God Almighty, walk before me, and be thou perfect.* And what was laid upon *Abraham* as a Command, we find *David* both resolving and promising, in the Strength

Psal. 116.

9.

of Grace, to do. *I will walk before the Lord in the Land of the Living.* To walk before the Lord implies, a framing the whole Life with a particular Reference to God; that is, with a Respect to his Presence, where we are continually: 'Tis to have such a godly, sober, righteous and unblameable Conversation in the World, as may be pleasing to God: 'Tis to think, speak and act in every Thing, as they that believe themselves to be continually under the Observation of his Eye: 'Tis to realize the Presence of God, evermore looking upon him, as always looking upon us, and narrowly observing the Way of our Hearts and of our Lives. *He counts all our Wanderings,* and notes them down in his Book of Remembrance; and they will one Day be brought forth in Judgment against us, unless we sincerely repent of them. For let Sin be acted never so secretly, and let it be disguised never so artfully, it can never be hid from the All-seeing Eye of God: *For all Things are naked and open, in the Eyes of him with whom we have to do.*

Heb. 4.

13.

To walk before God is to abstain carefully from every Thing that is displeasing to him: 'Tis to live constantly in a holy Dread and Awe of him: 'Tis to set the Lord always before us: 'Tis to avoid every such Act of Sin, as none but God and our own Consciences can know; as well as those that are exposed to the View of the World. The Scripture tells us, *The Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Wisdom:* For in Truth we never begin to be truly wise, to be wise for our Souls, to be wise unto Salvation, till we first learn to fear God,

Psal. 111.

10.

God, and stand in Awe to offend him; till we learn to *walk in the Fear of the Lord all the Day long*. To walk before God is to have God always in our Thoughts, and to consider what an one he is: 'Tis to remember and consider that he is infinite in Knowledge, Holiness, Power, Justice, and other Perfections; and that *he is of purer Eyes* Hab. 1, *than to behold Iniquity*. The great Cause of ^{12.} all the Wickedness that is in the World is, because (as David observes, speaking of ungodly Men) *God is not in all their Thoughts*. Psal. 16. They have indeed many Thoughts, and many Projects and Devices in their Hearts, but no Eye to God in any of them: They have few Thoughts of God, and far fewer that are serious and suitable or becoming. To walk before God is to *walk circumspectly*, to watch and pray that we enter not into Temptation: 'Tis to look well to our Ways, that we be not enticed to wander from the Way of his Commandments.

Secondly, It is sometimes called a *walking after the Lord*. Hence it is prophesied concerning Ephraim, that *they should walk after the Lord*. The Meaning is, they shall take

God for their Leader and Commander: They shall lift themselves under him, as *the Captain of their Salvation*, and cheerfully give up themselves to the Conduct of his Spirit by his Word: They shall leave all and follow him. You have a Expression parallel to this, in one of the Epistles of Paul, *Be ye therefore Followers of God, as dear Children*. We are bound to imitate God whom we worship and serve, in so far as he has revealed himself to be

imitable by us: For we must be conformed to his Example; hence we are commanded
 1 Pet. 1. *to be holy as he is holy. To be pure as he is pure;*
 16. *and to be perfect as our heavenly Father is per-*
 1 Joh. 3. *fect, and to be merciful as he also is merciful,*
 3. *and the like. And without all Peradventure*
 Matt. 5. *this puts a very great Honour and Lustre*
 48. *upon practical Religion, that it is our Imita-*
 Luke 6. *tion of God.*
 36.

Our blessed Lord Jesus Christ is the great Pattern we are commanded to imitate. Of him 'tis said, that *as he grew in Years he increased in Wisdom and Understanding:* So let us study to do; especially let us study to grow in spiritual Knowledge and Wisdom. Let us study to know God, and to know our selves: Let us study to know the Mind of God, as the same is revealed to us in his Word: Let us study to understand how much it is our Interest to live in an exact Conformity to the Precepts of our most holy Religion, and how much Danger there is in neglecting any of these Precepts. Christ's Will was so entirely resign'd to the Will of God in all Things, that he declares, *It was his Meat and his Drink to do the Will of him that sent him:* So should we desire that God's Will may be done, and his Glory advanced in the World, come of us and our Concerns what will. In all the Afflictions we meet with, let us heartily and cheerfully acquiesce in the Will of God our heavenly Father concerning us, without Murmuring or Repining at any of his Dealings towards us. Christ was
 Luke 2. *meek and lowly in Heart,* and he has command-
 40. *ed us to learn of him to be so. He was sin-*
 Joh. 4. *cere*
 24.
 Matt. 11. *29.*

cere in all his Words, and in his whole Deportment; for *he never offended in Word, nor in Deed: For he did no Sin, neither was Guile found in his Mouth.* 1 Pet. 2. 22.

And as there was no Deceit in his Words, so nothing but *gracious Words* proceeded out of his Mouth. So are we commanded to take Care that *no corrupt Communication* proceed out of our Mouths; but that which is good, to the Use of edifying, that it may minister Grace unto the Hearers. That is, tend to their Instruction. As Christ was inoffensive in his Words, so was he in his Actions, both with respect to God and Man: For he was much in secret Prayer, he attended punctually upon Ordinances, he was subject to his Parents, he was obedient to Magistrates, and he went about continually seeking Opportunities of doing good both to the Souls and Bodies of People. In all these Respects we are bound to imitate him exactly, that we may be *blameless and harmless, the Sons of God without Re- buke.* Eph. 4. 29. Phil. 2. 15.

Thirdly, This walking is in Scripture expressed by *walking in the Lord.* As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him. This Expression of walking in the Lord, I humbly conceive, points out two Things to us, and they are clearly implied in it.

(1.) Walking in the Lord is as much as to say, to walk in the Way of the Lord, even that Way which he hath pointed out to us in his Word. 'Tis to live in as exact Conformity to the Rules and Precepts that he hath laid down to us in the Scriptures as possibly

Matt. 28.
20.

possibly we can; neither omitting any Thing he has commanded, nor doing any Thing he has forbidden. *Teaching them to observe all Things, whatsoever I have commanded you.* 'Tis not only to observe the Rules of God's Word, in our general Conversation, and as we are Christians; but we must likewise conform our selves to those Rules, in our several particular Relations and Conditions of Life, and as we are severally differenced one from another. The Scripture is the Rule and the only Rule by which we are to govern our selves in every Respect, whatever Relation we stand in to others, whatever be our Station and Capacity in the World, and whatever be our Condition of Life; I say we are obliged in all these Respects to behave our selves in such a Manner, as God hath directed us in his Word. Neither can we be at a Loss how to behave our selves in any Case, if we *take Heed to this sure Word of Prophecy, as unto a Light that shineth in a dark Place.* If we either walk in a false Way, or take a false Step in the right Way, we are to blame for it our selves; For God has given us a Directory, which is both full and plain.

(2.) It is to walk dependingly on God; leaning upon him for Strength to do our whole Work and Duty, and continually looking up to him for Counsel and Conduct in all our Concerns, but especially in our Straits and Difficulties. The wisest and strongest Saint on Earth, if he trust to himself, will soon miscarry; and therefore 'tis necessary we carefully follow the Advice given us by Solomon to this Purpose, *Trust in the Lord with all thine Heart,*

Heart, and lean not to thine own Understanding: Prov. 4-
In all thy Ways acknowledge him, and he will di- 5. 6.
rect thy Paths. We must with an entire Sub-

jection and Satisfaction depend on him to perform all Things for us, and not lean to our own Wisdom and Strength as if we could, by any Forecast or Ability that's in us, without God, help our selves and bring our Affairs to a good Issue. Let us daily ask his Advice, and beg Direction from him, not only when the Case is difficult and we know not what to do; but in every Case, be it never so plain and easy: And the Necessity of this is very obvious; for our own Wisdom is but fallible, and liable to a great many Mistakes, and we are apt on every Occasion to blunder. We can never be too diffident of our selves. In all our Concerns especially those relating to our Souls, we must ask Success from God, as those that know, *the Race is not always to the Swift nor the Battle to the Strong*: We must refer our selves to him, as he from whom our Judgment proceeds, patiently and with a holy Submission waiting the Event. And if we do so, we shall never meet with a Disappointment: For he will be sure to direct our Paths, and in such a Manner as that our Way shall be both safe and good, and the Issue happy at long-run.

Fourthly, Sometimes 'tis called a walking in the Name of the Lord. Thus the Prophet: *For all People will walk in the Name of his God; and we will walk in the Name of the Lord our God, for ever and ever.* The Meaning is, all Nations will acknowledge their God, and cleave to him; will worship their God and serve him; will

Mic. 4. 5.

will depend upon their God, put Confidence in him : And so will we acknowledge the Lord our God in all our Ways, and govern ourselves by a continual Regard to him, doing nothing but what we have Warrant from him for, and we will on all Occasions openly profess our Relation to him, and our Interest in him. They are here resolving to govern themselves by such a Principle as that which the *Apostle* lays down to us, when he directs us, *Col. 3. 17.* that *Whatsoever we do in Word or in Deed, we do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus.* That is, we must do every Thing according to the Command of Christ, and in Compliance with his Authority ; we must do it by a Strength derived from him, and with an Eye to his Glory : We must do it in Dependence upon his Merits for Acceptance of what is good, and for Pardon of what is amiss. Every Thing in Religion must be done in the Name of God, and by Vertue of our having Allowance from him for the doing of it : This will make us resolute and fix'd in our Obedience, whatsoever Opposition we may meet with from Men ; and how much soever they may discourage, threaten and persecute us for it.

When the *Jewish Sanhedrim* were highly displeased with *Peter* and *John*, for preaching Christ, and commanded them not to preach any more, or to teach in the Name of Jesus, *Peter* and *John* answered and said, *Whether it be right in the Sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye ; for we cannot but speak the Things that we have seen and heard.* Were these
holy

holy Men frightened from their Duty by these Threatnings ? No such thing, they still persisted in it, notwithstanding of all that could be laid or done against them : being cloathed with Authority from God, they were fixt and unalterable in their Work. They walked *in the Name of the Lord their God*, and therefore they were resolute and unmoveable in what they did. I might observe the like to you with Respect to *Daniel*, when he was threatned to be cast into the Lions Den, if he would not quit his Religion, and neglect his Prayers ; and likewise with Reference to the three Children (as they are commonly called) *Shadrach, Meshech and Abednego*, who were certified that they should be cast into a fiery Furnace, if they refused to fall down and worship the golden Image which *Nebuchadnezzar* had caused to be made : None of them could be driven from their Duty by all that their Enemies could either say or do to them.

Fifthly, It is called sometimes *a walking with God*, as you see it is in the Text ; and then it seems to denote a walking in Company with God, and maintaining a Life of Communion with him. This excellently points out to us the incomparable Pleasure that is to be had in the Exercise of serious Religion : For how can they but enjoy inexpressible Pleasure ; that walk in Company with God, and have their Fellowship with the Father and the Son, through the blessed Spirit ? The unthinking Part of Mankind entertain very harsh and unjust Notions of Religion, while they fancy that to be Religious is to
live

live a dull, pensive and melancholly Life in the World, and to deprive our selves of every thing that's either Pleasant or Profitable. But on the contrary there are no such Pleasures to be had any where, as in the Exercise of serious Religion, as I might shew you in a great many Particulars were it needful.

I shall now proceed to shew you more particularly what is imply'd in this *walking with God*: And I judge it implies these four Things principally.

- (1.) A serious Diligence and Activity in Religion. To be Religious is what every one of us should make our chief Business in the World; whatever we neglect, let us not neglect this, for it is indeed the one Thing needful. *We should seek first the Kingdom of God, and his Righteousness*: That is, we should seek it before all Things, and above all Things; even with the greatest Diligence and Application imaginable. This is the principal Thing we should seek after: As for worldly Things, they are but accessory. Hence the *Apostle* exhorts the *Corinthians* to
- Matth. 6. 33. *buy as if they bought not, to marry as if they married not, and to do all other worldly Things as if they did them not, that they might serve God without Distraction.* And the *Psalmist* describes the godly Man to be
- 1 Cor. 7. 30. *one that delights in the Law of the Lord, and meditates on his Law Day and Night*: Which is not indeed to be understood as if we were quite to lay aside our worldly Calling, and do nothing but read, and meditate upon the Scriptures: For he that does not Work
- 2 Thes. 3. 10. *(says the Apostle) should not eat, and besides there*

there are several other Duties of Religion which we must perform. But the Meaning is, we must frequently, and with all Seriousness and Attention, read and meditate upon the Word of God in order to our being acquaint with our Duty, and excited to the faithful Performance of it : To do so is a certain Mark of a godly Man, and we will find it every way profitable to us.

Alas ! the greatest Part of Men cumber themselves about many Things and neglect the one Thing needful. They only consider Religion as a By-work, at least the Work of ag'd People, who have already one Foot in the Grave. But O what Folly is here ! Should we not set out early, and should we not proceed in the Ways of God with all Diligence, and with Constancy, Resolution and Vigour ? Look into Persons and Families, and you'll see the World, and the Enjoyments of Sense, much more regarded than the Business of Religion by the Generality : And does not the Love of the World make many People pray as if they prayed not, hear the Word as if they heard it not, and read the Scriptures as if they did not read 'em ? They do these Things with so much Carelessness and Indifferency, that 'tis just as bad as if they did 'em not at all. When they go about their worldly Affairs, O how keen and lively, how diligent and vigorous are they ? But take them to any Spiritual Exercise, and in these they are scandalously Slothful, nay perfectly Formal and Dead.

(2.) It

(2.) It implies Cheerfulness in God's Ways; a taking great Pleasure and Delight in Religion; walking, you know, is a voluntary Action, and in Scripture is frequently used for an Expression of Delight: So that to *walk with God*, is to delight in every Part of his Service. For doubtless there is nothing we should have so much real Pleasure in as in God's Ways. You'll see, with how much of a Spirit of Divine Elegancy that holy Man *David* expressed the particular Delight he took in God's Commandments, and how far he thought them preferable to all the Wealth and precious Things in the World, and to all the Treasures of Sense. *More to be desired are they, than Gold, yea than much fine Gold; sweeter also than the Honey and the Honey Comb.* There is nothing that the Generality of People have a greater Value for than Gold, to gain which, they toil their Bodies, fatigue their Minds, and expose themselves to innumerable Dangers and Inconveniencies: Men will risque almost every Thing for Gold; and yet you see *David* prefer'd Religion to it, and to every other worldly Thing else. It was Matter of rejoicing to his Soul, when he had an Opportunity of Converse with God in publick Ordmances, and he greedily embraced every Occasion of this Nature that offered.

Pfal. 122. *I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go up unto the House of the Lord.* They that really make Conscience of walking with God, and have tasted that the Lord is gracious, take delight in nothing so much, as in Conversing with him in holy Exercises: And the Reason is, because Duties and Ordinances are those

those Means by which they have Nearness with God; nay, sometimes they are, to the People of God, like the Mount of Transfiguration to the three Disciples: They cannot but find that it is every Way (to use the *Psal-*^{Psal. 73.}
mist's Words) *good for them that they draw*^{28.}
near to God. God loves to see his People cheerful in his Ways, and he is displeased to see them Drooping and Disconsolate.

Moreover, walking being (as I but just now hinted) a voluntary Action or Motion, I cannot but observe to you, that it points out this much to us, that Religion should be our own deliberate and voluntary Choice; otherwise we'll ne'er persevere in it. That which makes so many Apostates in the World is, People take up a Profession of Religion, they know not how: When they were young, they were baptized; their Parents taught them some of the common Principles of the Christian Religion, and when they grew up in Years, they came insensibly to profess Christianity; and they live and die without ever once examining into the Reasonableness and Excellency of these Principles. So that all their Religion is alienably owing to the Manner of their Education; and to use the Apostle *Peter's Words*, *They are not ready*^{1 Pet. 3:}
(that is, they are not truly capable) to give^{15.}
an Answer to every Man that asketh a Reason of the Hope that is in them. Religion is not the free Choice of such People. *I have chosen the*^{Psal. 119.}
Way of thy Judgment, thy Truth have I laid^{30, 31.}
before me, (says David) I have stuck unto thy Testimonies; because Religion was his own voluntary and deliberate Choice: He chus'd
Q it,

it, because of its intrinsick Beauty and Excellency; so that 'twas a rational Choice; and therefore he stuck to it; that is, he stedfastly adher'd to the Interest of Religion, and persevered in the Exercise of it. He had seriously considered both the Advantages and Inconveniencies of Religion, and saw that the Advantages sufficiently ballance all the Inconveniencies that can attend it; and therefore when he met with any Thing that was disturbing to him in the Exercise of Godliness, it did not move him, nor make him have the worse Opinion of Religion. I remember our blessed Lord sent some back, that came to offer themselves Volunteers in his Service, by informing them of the Hardships and Inconveniencies that commonly attend his Way; which, it seems, they either knew not, or at least had not fully consider-

Matth 8. ed. 19. *And a certain Scribe came and said unto him, Master I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, the Foxes have Holes, and the Birds of the Air have Nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his Head. And we don't read that this Man insisted any more upon what he had proposed with so much Forwardness.*

(3.) To walk with God implies also Constancy in Religion: For no Man can be said to walk with God, who only seems to mind the Business of Religion at certain Times and Seasons, and at other Times neglects it. 'Tis not to put on a Shew of Religion and Devotion about the Time of a Sacrament, or on a Sabbath-Day, or the like, as alas! the Custom of too too many is: This is but to step
into

into God's Way, as it were, by the By, rather than to walk in it. In one Word, to walk with God is, resolutely to persevere in a Course of serious Religion to the End of our Lives, according to the Advice of the *Apostle*, *Therefore, my beloved Brethren, be ye stedfast, ^{1 Cor. 15: 58.} unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your Labour is not in vain in the Lord.* Indeed the best of God's People have, through the Prevalency and Hurry of a Temptation, and the Strength of remaining Corruption, sometimes slept a little aside from God and his Way; witness *Noah, Lot, David, Peter*, and many others: But they did not continue to wander, but by Repentance were brought back, and so returned to the right Way. You must not *begin in the Spirit and end in the Flesh*, as many do, who set out fair in Religion, but soon weary in *Well-doing*. They find the Way to Heaven a strait and narrow Way, a Way that is full of Temptations and Difficulties, a Way wherein they meet with much Opposition, with many Discouragements, and with many powerful Enemies to withstand them, and they want Resolution, and can't think of putting themselves to so much Labour as is really necessary to surmount all these Difficulties. Some of you have been at the Lord's Table; beware you have not said to your Lusts as *Abraham* said to his Servants, *Tarry ye here* Gen. 22: till I and the Lad go yonder and worship, and come again to you. If it be so with any of you, I assure you your last State shall be worse than your first, and you shall be Seven-fold more the Children of Wrath than ever. Let

- me therefore beseech you seriously to consider the Necessity of Stedfastness, and Constancy in Religion. Hear what the *Apostle* to the *Hebrews* says to this Purpose; For we are made
- Heb. 3. 14. *Partakers of Christ, if we hold the Beginning of our Confidence stedfast unto the End. And again; But Christ as a Son over his own House:*
- Heb. 3. 6. *Whose are we, if we hold fast the Confidence, and the Rejoicing of the Hope firm unto the End. Hear again what our blessed Saviour says to*
- Matth. 24. *the same Purpose; But he that shall endure*
13. *unto the End, the same shall be saved.*

(4.) It likewise implys our making daily Advancement in Religion: For to walk, you know, is a progressive Motion. They that walk a Journey are still going forward, and coming nearer the Place they intend for. And so do they that walk with God make daily Progress in Religion: They grow daily in Grace and in Knowledge, and are still learning to mortify Corruption more and more, and to grow daily more and more lively and spiritual in Duties. It is a sure and unquestionable Maxim in practical Divinity, *Non progredi est regredi*: That is to say, not to be going forward in Religion is really to be going backward in it; for no Man can be at a Stand in Religion: Either he is advancing or decaying in it. We have been long under the Means of Grace, many a precious Season have we enjoyed, and we have had many excellent Opportunities to improve in Spirituals; surely then it concerns us to examine what Progress we have made in Religion all this Time: And I'm much affraid, if we deal impartially with
our

our selves in this Matter, many of us will find we have done but very little for our Souls; and, which is sad, some have need yet to learn what are the first Rudiments of Religion, what are the first Principles of the Doctrine of Christ. But even such of us, as have learn'd something of Religion, must not imagine, we have already attain'd, or are already made perfect: Let us not then be the Fools to sit down upon our Attainments; but study to go forward in Religion with all possible Speed, hastening to lay hold on eternal Life: And as the *Apostle* speaks to the *Hebrews*, *Let us therefore fear, lest a Promise being left us of entering into his Rest,* Heb. 4. 1. *any of you should seem to come short of it.* Let us not content our selves with some small Degrees of Grace and Holiness, but let us by all Means strive to be making daily Advances. Follow the *Apostle Peter's* Advice, *And besides this giving all Diligence, add to your* 2 Pet. 1. *Faith Virtue, and to Virtue Knowledge, and to* 5---8. *Knowledge Temperance, and to Temperance Patience, and to Patience Godliness, and to Godliness Brotherly-kindness, and to Brotherly-kindness Charity: For if these Things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitfull in the Knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

The next Thing in the Method is, to lay before you an Account of some of the Properties of this walking whereof I have been speaking.

And here I hope to let you see that they are such as cannot, but (if rightly considered) invite and encourage every one to walk with God in his Generation.

First, It is a plain Way of walking: 'Tis so plainly chalked out to us in the Word of God, that he who runs may read it; and 'tis truly wonderful that any should be so stupid as to mistake it; or be ignorant of any Part of it. They that are running away from God, and instead of walking with him, (as we are all bound to do) are walking in the broad Way that leads to Destruction; have none to blame for it but themselves: For were it not for Peoples wilfull Obstinacy, and their tamely suffering themselves to be led Captives by *Satan* at his Will, they would not, they could not walk in any other Way than in the Way of serious Religion, that being the only Way, wherein they can promise to themselves Comfort and Peace; and 'tis the Way wherein they are in the least Danger of Mistake, because, as was just now said, 'tis so plainly pointed out to us in Scripture. The Prophet *Isaiah* has a Word

Isa. 35. 8. full to this Purpose, *And an High-way shall be there, and a Way, and it shall be called the Way of Holiness: The Unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for those; the wayfaring Men, tho' Fools, shall not err therein.* An High-way and a Way are not to be taken for two different Ways, but both of 'em signify a convenient and prepar'd, a plain and common Way, a Way wherein Travellers should walk; I mean those that are travelling towards Heaven. This is the Way of Holiness, troden only by holy Men, and filled with the excellent Fruits of Righteousness and Holiness: This Way is so plain, so easie and straight, that even the most Foolish cannot easily mis-

mistake it. Tho' perhaps some of you may be of very weak Capacities, as to other Things, yet here you have such plain Directions from the Word of God, that you cannot be guilty of any fatal Blunder or Miscarriage, if you'll but take heed to what is written.

It is true, the best and wisest of People are sometimes so much diffculted, that they know not well what Hand to turn themselves to ; but then these Difficulties don't so much proceed from the Obscurity and Uncertainty of the Way wherein they are to walk, as from the spiritual Indisposition which they for the present labour under. There's no Case wherein a Child of God can be, but there is a plain Direction in the Word of God, how to carry in these Circumstances, and if he does not manage himself accordingly, the Blame must ly at his own Door : 'Tis his Want of a Spirit, of discerning for the Time, that makes them overlook those Passages of Scripture that would afford 'em all necessary Advice. Indeed the best of Saints, if left to 'emselvcs, are ready to wander from this plain Way : But then God has promis'd, *He will never leave them nor* Heb. 13, *forsake them. He will neither leave them total-* 5. *ly nor finally. Here's then the Security of the Saints against a final Apostacy ; that he with whom they walk, is God Almighty and God All-sufficient, and therefore both can and will support 'em under all the Difficulties and Opposition they can meet with : His Grace shall be sufficient for them. God has engaged both for his own Stedfastness and ours. That is one of the most remarkable*

Jer. 32.
42.

Promises in all the Scripture : *And I will make an everlasting Covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them Good ; but I will put my Fear in their Hearts, and they shall not depart from me.* Pray observe these two Expressions, *I will not turn away from 'em to do them Good, and they shall not depart from me.* God hath plighted his Word that the Believer shall never fall away totally nor finally : He faithfully performs his Part of the Covenant ; and he will give Believers Strength to perform their Part of it. How happy then above all others, are they who walk with God.



SER-

SERMON X.

Of walking with G o d.

G E N. V. 24.

And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.

THEY grossly mistake Religion, that fancy it consists, either wholly, or chiefly in Forms and Professions: *Not every one that shall say unto me (says Christ) Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; But only they that do the Will of my Father which is in Heaven.* ^{Marth. 7. 21.} True Religion lies in these two Things principally: Namely, in having our inward Man transform'd into the Divine Likeness, and our outward Man conformed unto the Divine Law. If we fail in either of these; if either our Hearts are not right with God, or our Lives not agreeable to the Rules of his Word, we are yet Strangers to Religion, think or profess what we will; and if we persist in either

either of these Neglects, God will never own us for his People. Practical Religion is most elegantly described by that Expression in the Text, *And Enoch walked with God*. What this walking is, I have already, in some Measure, explain'd to you: And likewise I have shewn you that to walk with God is a plain Way of walking: And I beg your serious Attention to what I have further to say in Commendation of it. And therefore,

Secondly, It is a *straight* and *easy*, as well as a plain Way of walking. The Way of Sin and Rebellion against God is in Scripture described to be a most crooked Way. But as

Psal. 125. *for such as turn aside unto their crooked Ways,*
5. *the Lord shall lead them forth with the Workers of Iniquity.* The Way of Sin is a very rugged and uneasy Way; and Men are really at much more Toil and Fatigue in fulfilling their Lusts, than they would be at in mortifying them. There are but two Ways in which Men can walk; the one is the Way of Godliness, and the other the Way of Sin: The Way of Sin is indeed a broad Way, but withal 'tis a very crooked and uneasy, a rugged and dangerous Way, and leads Men to Hell; 'tis a Way full of Tribulation and Anguish, and leads Men to eternal Anguish and Torment. Tribulation

Rom. 2. 9. *and Anguish upon every Soul of Man that doth Evil; to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile.* But as for the Way in which we are to walk with God, which is the Way of serious Religion, tho' it be indeed a strait and narrow Way, a Way in which we will meet with much Opposition, and with many Enemies

and

and outward Discouragements; yet withal 'tis a straight and pleasant Way, and leads Men to Heaven. If at any Time we step out of God's Way, in this Respect, we make the Way to Heaven crooked to our selves, and bring many Calamities and Mischiefs upon us which otherwise we might have avoided; By this Means, we, as it were, cast our selves a great Way about, and may perhaps wander long and far, before we can recover our selves; like a Traveller, who if once he goes off the right Road, wanders long before he can find it again. When *David* stepped out of God's Way, in the Matter of *Uriah* and *Bathsheba*, some Divines think 'twas about an Year before he was brought to Repentance and Humiliation: And perhaps they are in the Right who think that he never afterwards had such full Assurance of God's Favour, as he had before he fell into these Sins. Had he not thus stepped out of God's Way, he had not gone so far about; and he had escaped many grievous Troubles, which these two Sins brought not only upon his own Person, but his Family.

Thirdly It is the most Profitable, or rather, 'tis the only profitable Way we can walk in. Any other Way but this, that a Man can walk in, is in every Respect prejudicial and hurtful to him. In walking with God there is to be found present Profit, and future Profit: Profit in walking with God, and Profit after we have walked with him: Here is to be found Advantage to our Souls and Advantage to our Bodies; Advantage to our selves

Pfal. 35.
16.

Rom. 6.
20, 21, 22,
23.

selves and Advantage to our Posterity. In one Word, here is to be had every Thing we need : Pardon, Peace, Protection, Food, Raiment, Justification, Reconciliation, Nearness with God, and a great many other valuable Blessings more than I can tell; all tending to our present Comfort, and future Happinels. What Advantage can Men promise to themselves by walking in the Way of Sin and Rebellion against God? Does not the Scripture assure us, that *the Face of the Lord is set against them that do Evil, to cut off the Remembrance of 'em from the Earth?* How miserable must the Case of those be, who by their Wickedness have made God their Enemy? For he is able to turn them into Hell. Hear how the *Apostle* expostulates upon this Subject : *For when ye were the Servants of Sin, ye were free from Righteousness : What Fruit had ye then in those Things whereof ye are now ashamed? For the End of those Things is Death. But now being made free from Sin, and become Servants to God, ye have your Fruit unto Holiness, and in the End everlasting Life : For the Wages of Sin is Death ; but the Gift of God is eternal Life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. They that make it their Business to walk with God in their Generation, he will daily load them with his Favours: His Hand shall help 'em in all their Distresses, his Counsel shall direct them in all their Doubts, his omnipotent Arm shall protect them in all their Dangers, his Grace shall assist them in all their Temptations, his Power shall defend them from all their Enemies, and his Com-*
forts.

forts shall delight their Souls in all their Afflictions, and when they have *finisbed their Course* here, *they shall walk with him in White* for ever hereafter.

Fourthly, To walk with God is the Way of *Peace*. There is a two-fold Peace which this walking with God will most certainly bring to us :

(1.) 'Twill bring us into a State of Peace with God. By Nature we are all in a State of Enmity against God ; nay there is such a rooted Enmity in our Nature against God, that it had been utterly impossible for us to have had so much as the least Thoughts of, or Inclination to a Reconciliation, unless the first Motions and Advances towards it had come from himself. O wonderful Condescension! That the great *Jehovah* makes Overtures of Peace and Reconciliation to his own Creatures ; nay to his rebellious and sinful Creatures. Here is indeed Goodness truly Divine, and what will be the Wonder of Angels, and glorified Saints to Eternity. God is not only willing, but desirous to be at Peace with us, and he courts us to it. He beseeches us, he presses us to it. And to convince us how serious and earnest he is in the Thing, he sent his own only begotten Son from Heaven to Earth, purposely to negotiate a Peace with us, and to be the Mediator betwixt him and us, who has now actually satisfy'd all the Demands that Divine Justice had against us : So that there remains nothing to compleat the Reconcealment, but that we, for our Part, lay down the Weapons of our Warfare, and come in and accept of that Peace that he offers.

offers. Christ laid aside the Robes of his Glory for a while, and clothed himself with the Rages of our Humanity; he suffered and died the cursed and ignominious Death of the Cross; he endured the Wrath of God, and the Rage of Man: and all to purchase and bring in an everlasting Peace between God and us. And shall we be so stupid and wilful? Shall we be so ungrateful to him, and such Enemies to our selves, as to refuse to be at Peace with him?

Immediately upon the Birth of Christ, a Multitude of the heavenly Host were sent to proclaim this blessed Peace in these remarkable Words, *Glory to God in the Highest, on Earth Peace, Good-will towards Men.* After our Lord entered upon his publick Ministry, wherever he went, he continually offered Peace and Pardon to all that would come in and accept of it. and before he left the World, he established a standing Ministry, purposely to treat in his Name with Sinners, and persuade them to a hearty Reconciliation. Now

Luke 2. 14. *then we are Ambassadors for Christ, as tho' God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's Stead, be ye reconciled to God. Tho' God can be no Loser by the Quarrel, nor Gainer by the Peace; yet by us he beseeches you to lay aside your Enmity, and be at Peace with him. I pray you consider what will become of you if you refuse the Peace he offers you: Surely your Punishment shall be far greater than it would have been, had you never heard of any Terms of Accommodation. Christ purchased this blessed Peace at a very dear Rate, for he shed his Blood, he laid down his*

2 Cor. 5. 20.

his precious Life, he endured the Contradiction of Sinners, and drank deep in the Cup of his Father's Wrath; and all to purchase this Peace: And if after all this you shall refuse to be at Peace with God, and will continue in your Enmity and Rebellion, and not walk with God, verily there remains no more for you, but a fearful looking for, and Expectation *Rom. 2.* of the fiery Indignation of God, which shall devour all his obstinate Adversaries. After your *6.* Hardness and impenitent Hearts, you treasure up to your selves Wrath against the Day of Wrath, and Revelation of the righteous Judgment of God; who will render to every Man according to his Deeds.

(2.) Walking with God will bring us into a State of Peace with our selves, even Peace in our own Consciences. This the *Apostle* expresses by having a Conscience void of Offence toward God, and toward Man. This *Acts 24.* Peace whereof I speak is the Result of our *16.* Peace with God: So that no Man can have true Peace of Conscience, that is not in a State of Peace and Friendship with God. As for wicked and ungodly Men, who yet have their Hearts full of deadly Enmity against God, who are without God in the World, and walk contrary to him; I say, as for them, what have they to do with this Peace? For *Isa. 57.* there is no Peace saith my God to the Wicked. *21.* So long as Men continue in their Sins they can neither have Peace with God, nor Peace in their own Minds: For the Way of Peace *Psal. 58.* they have not known. There is indeed a false Peace, which many wicked People and Hypocrites have; for the Devil stupifies their Con-

Consciences, putting them fast asleep, and making them dream of Safety and Peace, without any Apprehensions of Danger, tho' they are upon the very Brink of Ruin. But you may take this for a certain Truth, that true Peace of Conscience is never bestowed on any that are not truly penitent, and that do not walk humbly with God, For thus saith the High and Lofly One, that inhabiteth Eternity, whose Name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy Place, with him also that is of a humble and contrite Spirit, to revive the Spirit of the humble, and to revive the Heart of the contrite Ones.

Isa. 57.
15.

The same Prophet, speaking of Christ's Mediatory Office, has this remarkable Passage, The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he hath appointed me to preach good Tidings unto the Meek: He hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim Liberty to the Captives, and the Opening of the Prison to them that are bound, to proclaim the acceptable Year of the Lord, and the Day of the Vengeance of our God: To comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion; to give them Beauty for Ashes, the Oil of Joy for Mourning, the Garment of Praise for the Spirit of Heaviness. This Peace can be attained to only by such as walk with God; For in Christ Jesus neither Circumcision availeth any Thing, nor Uncircumcision, but a new Creature. And as many as walk according to this Rule, (or to speak in the Style of the Text, as many as walk with God) Peace be on them, and Mercy, and upon the Israel of God. 'Tis only Wisdom's Ways that are Ways of Pleasantness, and all her Paths are Peace.

Isa. 61.
12, 13.

Gal. 6.
15, 16.

Prov. 3.
17.

And

SERMON. X. *Of walking with God.*

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And 'tis only to his People and to his Saints *Psalm. 85.*
that God speaks Peace: But they must not re-
turn again unto Folly; for this is the Way to
interrupt their Peace.

Would you then have Peace with God?
And would you have Peace in your own Con-
sciences? Would you have Peace in your Lives,
Peace in Death, and Peace to all Eternity?
Here's the certain and only Way to it: Walk
with God, and you shall be sure of it; and
I assure you, the more closely you walk with
God, your Peace shall be the more uninterr-
rupted, and you shall have the greater Abun-
dance of it. Perhaps indeed you'll meet with
little outward Peace in the World; For in *Joh. 16.*
the World ye shall have Tribulation: But ye *33.*
shall have Peace with God, and ye shall have
such Peace in your own Minds, as all the wic-
ked Men in the World, and all the Devils in
Hell cannot rob you of. This Peace, I say,
shall no Man nor Devil be able to take from
you.

And thus I have given you an Account
of some of the Properties of walking with
God, and might also have shown you, that
'tis the most pleasant, the most safe, and the
most honourable Way of walking; but hav-
ing spoken to these Heads from another Text,
I shall forbear speaking of them here.

I shall, in the last Place, lay down some
Rules, whereby you may be helped to walk
with God. These Rules shall be of two Sorts:
The First shall direct you as to these Things
that you must carefully avoid; and the Second
shall point out to you some Things which
you must faithfully practise, in Order to your
walk-

walking with God. Of the first Sort, take these following.

I. Beware of Mistakes about walking with God. There's a two-fold Mistake that People may be liable to here, both which must with equal Care be avoided.

(1.) Beware of imagining that to walk with God is a Way wherein you will meet with nothing to disturb or disquiet you: On the contrary, you must lay your Account with the Cross, and to wade through a whole Sea of Troubles. If you have engaged to follow a Course of serious Religion, without considering the Difficulties and Hardships that commonly attend that Way, and resolving upon them, truly you are not likely to persevere: But if you resolve upon the worst, when you meet with Troubles, they will not stifle nor discompose you: nor will you think the work of Religion because of these Inconveniencies. They grossly mistake Religion, who think they can walk with God, and get to Heaven, without undergoing a great deal of Trials, since the Scripture assures us, *It is through many Tribulations that we must enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* And that *the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth Violence, and the Violent take it by Force.* And likewise that *strait is the Gate, and narrow is the Way which leadeth unto Life, and few there be that find it.*

Acts 14.
22.

Matt. 11.
12.

Matt. 7.
14.

(2.) On the other Hand, you must beware of imagining, that God is a hard Master to serve, and that to walk with him is a dull, pensive, melancholy Thing, and the direct Way to ruin your worldly Interests. Many People

People have such frightful Apprehensions of Religion, as exceedingly increase their natural Aversion to it; but this flows alienarily from their Ignorance, and Want of Thought: They consider not Religion in that Light in which the Spirit of God represents it to us in Scripture; they that consider it thus, cannot but have a very high Opinion of it. 'Tis one of *Satan's* main Devices, to misrepresent Religion, that he may thereby frighten us from it. And indeed, if we allow him to draw the Picture of Godliness, he'll be sure to set it off so much to the Disadvantage, to represent it with such a sour and ugly Countenance, and to disfigure it after such a Manner, as will be apt to make us lay by all Thoughts of it for ever. But let the Father of Liars say the worst of Religion he can, it is the best Choice we can make; as is clear from what I have said in the foregoing Part of this Discourse. I'm confident if even they, who have the most unfavourable Notion of Religion, could but be perswaded to make a Trial of it, and impartially consider all that can be said for and against it, they would quickly change their Minds about it: But alas! most People lose themselves through Want of Thought.

II. Beware of Unbelief: For no Man can walk with God, so long as he remains in Unbelief. Now there is a two-fold Unbelief that you must be very careful to guard against, in Order to this Way of walking.

(1.) Beware of misbelieving the Promises of God's Word. Many rich Blessings are promised in Scripture to them that walk with
 R 3 God,

God, even all the Blessings of Heaven and Earth: And if Men could but once be brought to believe that there's really so much Comfort and Advantage every Way to be found in Religion, 'tis impossible but they must both love and study it. But alas! the Atheism and Unbelief of Men's Hearts makes them doubt of the Truth of what the Word of him who is the God of Truth hath sufficiently assured us of. What Reason have we to cry out with the Father of that Child which was possess'd with a dumb Spirit, and to cry out with Tears, *Lord help our Unbelief*. It is impossible that any could live in the Neglect of Religion, if they believed there is really so much Profit and Pleasure to be found in it.

Mark
24.

9.

ROMA 1.
18.

2 THESS. 1.
8, 9.

MATT. 11.
10, 21, 22,
23.

(2.) Beware of Disbelief of the Threatnings of God's Word. Is not *the Wrath of God reveal'd from Heaven against all Unrighteousness and Ungodliness of Men*? And are we not told, there is a Day coming when *Christ will appear in flaming Fire, to take Vengeance on all them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of his Son? who shall be punish'd with everlasting Destruction from the Presence of the Lord, and from the Glory of his Power*. Hath not our blessed Saviour certified us, that *it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment, than it will be for those that enjoy the Privileges of the Gospel, and abuse them*. But these and the like Threatnings make no Impression, and therefore have no suitable Influence upon the Generality of People, because they believe them not: For would Men swear, and lye, and cheat? Would they commit Whoredom?

dom? Would they profane the Sabbath, and neglect Ordinances? Would they reject the Calls of the Gospel, and condemn the Precepts of it? Would they spend their precious Time in *Chambering and Wantonness, in Rioting and Drunkenness*, and wallow in all Manner of Abominations? I say, would they commit these Things if they really believ'd the Threatnings of God's Word? Surely no. But if they are really such Infidels as to look upon these Threatnings to be only so many Scar-crows and Bug-bears, set up only to frighten Children and Fools, what Influence can they have upon them? But whether you will hear, or whether you will forbear, the Faithfulness of God will oblige him to execute all the Curses written in his Word upon impenitent Sinners; as well as make good all his Promises to them that walk with him.

III. Beware of Indulging your selves in any Lust: For if you indulge your selves in any of these, you cannot walk with God. If you have but one Lust unmortified, it will sooner or later bring forth the bitter Fruits either of Scandal or Apostacy, or both; and 'twill damn a Man to live in one Sin, as well as in many. We are all engaged in a spiritual Warfare, and profess to be Travellers to Heaven, and if we live under the Power of any Sin, we cannot promise our selves any Success in this Warfare, but will certainly fall before our Enemies; nor can we move so much as one Step in the Way that leads to Heaven, every Sin being a Weight and a Burden too heavy for him, that intends to

Heb. 12.
1.

walk with God : Let us therefore punctually observe the Advice the *Apostle* gives us, when he directs us to lay aside every Weight, and the Sin that doth so easily beset us, that we may run with Patience the Race that is set before us. Let us strive to get Corruption daily more and more subdued : For the less Corruption we have, the fitter are we for this walking, and we have the less to incommode us in it. 'Tis true we can never get quite rid of our Sin let us do our best, so long as we are in the Body : But yet we ought to die daily unto Sin, and live unto Righteousness ; and the more we crucify the Flesh with the Lusts and Affections, we have the less to hinder us in our Christian Walk, and we will make the quicker Advances in it.

IV. Beware of Worldly-mindedness. Set not your Affections on any earthly Thing ; For this will prove no small Hinderance to you in walking with God ; 'twas Worldly-mindedness that ruin'd *Demas* ; 'twas this also that ruin'd *Judas*, and 'tis this that daily ruins infinite others. They that have their Hearts set upon this World, or the Things of this World, cannot seriously mind the Concerns of another Life, nor can they hold out long in this Walk whereof I speak : For so soon as worldly minded People perceive any of their earthly Comforts expos'd to Danger, they would be ready to forsake Religion, rather than risque these perishing Trifles. The less our Hearts are set upon earthly Things, we will walk the more closely with God, and our walking with him will be the more easy and pleasant to us.

What

What

What is there, I beseech you, in the World, or in any earthly Comfort, that People should be so fond of them? Are not *all Things under* Eccl. 1. 2. *the Sun Vanity of Vanities, and Vexation of Spirit?* Can you carry any of your Creature-Comforts to the Grave with you? Or, supposing you could, would they be any Way useful to you there? No. And besides, 'tis possible for you to lose all your earthly Enjoyments before your Departure hence. All that's in the World is most uncertain and unconstant, most fickle and wavering; and therefore not worth the Half of that Time and Concern we commonly bestow on 'em: Let us then be crucified to the World, and to the Riches, Pleasures, Honours and Relations we have, or expect in it, since Death will bereave us of 'em all, and we may lose them much sooner. *Set your Affections on those Things that are above, and not on Things on the Earth.* Col. 3. 2.

V. Beware of Timorousness. Be not of a cowardly Spirit, if you desire to walk with God. Many People are afraid that, if they begin seriously to mind the Concerns of Religion, which indeed are the great Concerns of their immortal Souls, perhaps they will lose their Places of Honour and Power; and expose themselves to a Multitude of Dangers and Inconveniencies in the World, they will be hated and reproached, haras'd and persecuted; and they dare not venture upon these Things: They resolve to keep themselves easy, and shun Troubles and Sufferings as much as possible: But sure I am, they that are of such a timorous Spirit are

Prov. 22.
13.

very unfit to travel in the Way to Heaven, which is so full of Difficulties and Opposition. What Solomon says of the Sluggard is true also of the Coward: He says, *There is a Lion in the Way, I shall be slain in the Streets.* When he is press'd to Diligence and Activity in the Business of Religion, he alledgeth such insuperable Difficulties and Dangers, as he can't pretend to grapple with. Many People pretend they would fain walk with God, but there are such Difficulties and Discouragements attending that Way, that they despair of ever being able to wrestle through them. But do Difficulties discourage you, from minding your worldly Concerns? Why then should they discourage you from minding the Concerns of your precious Souls? You can't do other Work without Hardship and Trouble, and why will ye not cheerfully undergo Trouble and Fatigue for your Souls that must live for ever? *The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth Violence, and the Violent take it by Force.*

Matth. 11.
12.

'Tis true you have many strong Enemies to fight against, the Devil, the World, and the Flesh; and you must conquer all these before you can get to Heaven. But if you behave yourselves with Courage, and resolve to conquer or die: You'll find your Work not so Difficult as you imagine it to be. That God with whom you walk, will put Strength in you for your Work and Warfare; he will *make his Grace sufficient for you*, and make you Conquerours, yea, and *more than Conquerours*, through him that loved us, and laid down his Life for us. Your Enemies are powerful, but they are Enemies already conquered. Christ has

SERM. X. *Of walking with God.*

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has spoil'd 'em of all the Strength they had, and blunted the Edge of all their Weapons; so that they are not able to do any great Execution, if you but resist bravely. Quit you like Men, and you shall overcome; whatever the Force of your Enemies is; there's no Doubt of it; *Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you*, says the Apostle. *Jam. 4. 7.* If we basely and tamely yield to Temptations, the Devil will continually follow us with new Temptations: But if we put on the whole Armour of God, and stand it out against him, he will be gone from us. They that have no Heart to the Business of Religion, dream of a great many Difficulties, which nothing but their own deluded Imaginations suggest to them; But he that honestly and sincerely endeavours to do his Duty, and does it with Boldness and Resolution; finds his Work both easy and pleasant to him.

VI. Beware of Self-Confidence. As we must not be Cowards, so neither must we be Confident in our selves: We must indeed put on holy Resolutions of forcing our Way through all the Difficulties and Opposition we may meet with in our walking with God: But we must not think to conquer these Difficulties by our own Strength. Nay we must not attempt even the easiest Part of our Work in our own Strength; *without John. 15. no (says Christ) ye can do nothing.* And if we can do nothing without him, what Folly is it to trust to our selves in any Case? *Trust in the Lord with all thine Heart, and lean not on thine own Understanding. In all thy Ways, acknowledge him, and he will direct thy Paths. Prov. 3. 5, 6.* They

They that know any Thing of themselves, cannot but find their own Understanding to be a broken Reed, which will certainly fail them, if they lean to it. We had indeed once Power to do Good; but the Fall robb'd us of that Power, so far that, *Of our selves, as of our selves, we cannot now so much as think our good Thought; but our Sufficiency is of God.* It must needs then be the most foolish Thing imaginable to be confident of our selves, especially in Cases of Danger and Difficulty. Even in a regenerate Man, tho' to will be Present, yet how to perform he knows not without special Grace. The best of People have Difficulty to raise up their Hearts to their Work; or rather, they can't do it at all without the Influences of Grace.

A Man who is trembling in himself, for Fear of being drawn away with Temptations, and overwhelm'd with the Trials and Difficulties he meets with, will hold out and stand his Ground, when he who is self-confident, and has few Doubts and Jealousies of himself, will fall away. When Christ said to his Disciples, *All of you shall be offended because of me this Night; so confident was Peter, that he protested, tho' all should forsake Christ, he would not forsake him: Nay, he would rather die with him, than deny him.* But what became of all these fair Promises and Protestations? Verily he no sooner met with the Temptation, but as soon he deny'd his Lord and Master, and that with an Oath and a Curse. Had he been less confident in his own Strength and acted Faith and Dependence on God, he had undoubtedly overcome that Temptation

on, and had witnessed a noble Confession in the Face of his Enemies, and in the Face of the most threatening Dangers. A very small Temptation will soon overcome the strongest Christian, unless he have the assisting and supporting Grace of God.

And thus having shown you what are these Things you must avoid carefully, in order to your walking with God: I'm next to direct you as to these Things that you must carefully Practise in order thereto. And,

I. Get a cordial and affectionate Love to God and his Ways. *Can two walk together, unless they be agreed?* Says the Prophet. No, they can't. For where there is no Friendship, to be sure there can be no Fellowship. If two Persons are at Variance, and hate one another, they must first accommodate all Matters of Difference between 'em, before there can be any interchanging of good Offices. 'Tis so here; unless we love God we cannot walk with him: And the more Love we have to God, we will be the more constant to him, the more steadfast in his Ways, and the more active and diligent in his Service. An Heart really inflam'd with Love to God, will make us cleave fast to him with full Purpose of Heart all the Days of our Lives, notwithstanding of all the Trouble and Fatigue we may endure for the Sake of Religion. What is it that makes many People so averse to walk with God, and what is it that makes them waver, and prove unstedfast in his Ways? I assure you this is owing to nothing more, than to their Want of Love to God. If we could learn

learn to love the Lord our God with all our Hearts and Souls, and with all our Minds and Strength, we would take Pleasure in nothing so much as in him, and in keeping up a close Correspondence and Fellowship with him.

II. See that you get and keep a tender Conscience. This is an excellent Preservative against Apostacy; for such a Conscience as this will make a Man sensible of the least Sin he can be guilty of; and challenge him for it. As the Apple of the Eye is the most tender and sensible Part of the Body, for 'tis not only sensible of a Stroke, and offended if it receives a Blow or Wound, but if so much as a little small Dust or Smoke get into the Eye, it quickly feels the Smart of it. In like Manner, a tender Conscience is the most delicate Thing imaginable; 'tis the most nice Thing in the World, and is not only offended at the gross and scandalous Sins that a Man is guilty of, but at the least and smallest Sin whatsoever, yea even at the very Appearance of Sin. And truly to have such a Conscience, as makes a Man fear, and stand in Awe of the least Breach of any of God's Commandments, is the most necessary and useful Companion a Man can have. A Man that stands in Awe to commit the smallest Sin, is really the most valiant Man in the World. A Man that hath a tender Conscience will rather chuse to undergo any the greatest Sufferings than commit the least Sin: And thus to fear, is the greatest Magnanimity and Bravery.

III. Keep a constant and strict Watch over your Hearts, according to the Advice that Solomon gives you: *Keep thine Heart with*

all Diligence, for out of it are the Issues of Life. Prov. 4.
We must be more careful to keep our Heart^{23.}
than any Thing else, for the Heart is the
Spring of all our Actions, and 'tis that which
seasons all we either do or say. Let us there-
fore be careful to keep up good Thoughts,
and to keep out evil Thoughts. Two Things
will make it appear that there is nothing re-
quires greater Care and Diligence in the keep-
ing of it, than the Heart of Man.

(1.) The Character the holy Ghost gives
the Heart of Man in Scripture; *For the Heart* Jer. 17. 9.
is deceitful above all Things, and desperately
wicked, who can know it? The Heart is subtle
and false, apt to supplant and cheat us, if
we are not careful enough to watch over it,
and if we have not a constant Jealousie of its
Designs. Now, this being the Character of
the Heart, is it not most necessary that we
keep a strict Eye upon it, and watch all its
Motions?

(2.) As I said just now, the Heart is the
Fountain of all our Actions. 'Tis that which
does either sweeten or poison all we either
say or do. 'Tis the Spring that makes the
Stream of our Lives run either clear or mud-
dy: *For out of the Abundance of the Heart,* Matt. 12.
the Mouth will speak. All the Sins we are^{24.}
guilty of in our Lives, have their Rise from
the Fountain of the Heart; according to
that of the Apostle James, *Then when Lust* Jam. 1.
hath conceived (namely, in the Heart) it bring- 15.
eth forth Sin; (viz. in the Life.) So that
you see, there's an absolute Need of keeping
the Heart with the utmost Care. And I
assure you, all the Miscarriages Men are guilty
of

of in their Lives, are owing to a great Measure, if not wholly, to the Neglect of their Heart: If we are not watchful of our Hearts, our Lives can never be holy, and consequently, we can't walk with God.

IV. Withdraw your selves, as much as possible, from all Occasions and Temptations of sinning: For 'tis not safe, nay, contrariwise, 'tis exceeding dangerous to stand in the Way of a Temptation; because (as was observed formerly) we have the Seed and Root of every Sin in our Nature. If we consult our own Good, we will not so much as stand in the Way of a Temptation, nor make Trial of it, lest the Experiment prove dangerous and ensnaring, and it be difficult to retire with Safety: We must not venture into the Company of them that are infected with the Plague, even tho' we be guarded with an Antidote. The Way of wicked Men may seem pleasant and sociable, and the next Way to compass our secular End; but 'tis an evil Way, and will end in Sorrow and Shame: Therefore if we desire to walk with God, we must keep as far from it as we can, and the further the better, remembering what Advice the Apostle gives us: *Abstain from all Appearance of Evil.* 'Tis exceeding dangerous, so much as to gaze upon the forbidden Fruit, many have paid dear for their Curiosity this Way: For if (as we said before) we so much as doubt, or be suspicious that a Thing is sinful, we are guilty of Sin if we do it, whether it be in it self sinful or not: Let us therefore walk circumspectly, and take good heed to our selves, for we live in the

Midst

1 Thef. 5.
22.

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Midd of an evil and ensnaring World, and if we are not watchful to guard against Sin, and every Thing that hath a Tendency there-
to, we may soon be led aside from God.

V. Keep an Eye constantly upon the great Recompence of Reward, that God hath laid up for those that walk with him. Difficulties and Discouragements in walking with God you must resolve upon; and when you meet with any Thing of this Kind, to keep up your Spirits, and to animate you against them, I know not a more speedy and effectual Course you can take, than seriously to consider, how great your Reward in Heaven will be, if you persevere in walking with God, and be faithful to him, even unto the Death. The believing Prospect of Heaven is able to support us under the greatest Pressures of Affliction we can meet with. *Moses* was exposed to very great Trials in the Exercise of Religion: For 'twas put to his Choice, whether to be advanced to great Honours and Riches; or to endure all Manner of Troubles and Persecutions. If he would quit his Religion, he should be called the Son of *Pharaoh's* Daughter, succeed him on the Throne, and enjoy all the Dignities and Pleasures that *Egypt* could afford: But in Case he persevered in his Religion, and could not be brought off from walking with God; then he must lay his Account with the worst, and resolve to endure all the Hardships that the Cruelty and Malice of wicked Men could load him with. But neither those alluring Promises on the one Hand could entice him, nor on the other Hand could all their most terrible Threats

Threatnings frighten him out of his Religion.
 Heb. 11¹ He refused to be called the Son of Pharaoh's
 24, 25; Daughter, choosing rather to suffer Affliction with
 26. the People of God, than enjoy the Pleasures of
 Sin for a Season: esteeming the Reproaches of
 Christ greater Riches than the Treasures of E-
 gypt: And that which did so wonderfully
 animate him to this, was, he had Respect un-

Heb. 12² to the recompence of Reward. Nay, what shall
 2. I say? Even our blessed Lord himself, for
 the Joy that was set before him, endured the
 Cross, despising the Shame, and is set down at
 the right Hand of the Throne of God.

VI. Study to be well acquainted with the
 Scriptures; according to the express Command
 Joh. 5-39, of our blessed Saviour, Search the Scriptures,
 for in them ye think ye have eternal Life, &c. The
 Scriptures point out the Way to us, in which
 Psal. 119¹⁰⁵ we are to walk with God: For they are a
 Light unto our Feet, and a Lamp unto our Path:
 They declare unto us what is Sin, that we
 may avoid it; and what is Duty that we
 may perform it; adducing such Arguments, as
 are proper to dissuade us from the one, and
 engage us to the other: They plainly teach
 us what we are to believe, and what we are
 to do, in Order to eternal Life: They di-
 rect us how to behave in every Relation,
 and in every Condition of Life; and they
 point out to us what our Behaviour should
 be under every Administration of Providence:
 So that you see they are a full Directory to
 us, how we should walk with God. The
 Psal. 119²⁴ Scriptures were David's Counsellors; he
 found infinitely more Comfort and Safety in
 a careful Observation of the Precepts of
 God's

God's Word, than in the Multitude of other Counsellors: And without all Controversie the Scriptures are the best Counsellors, not only for Kings and Princes, but for all other Persons; so long as we keep close by them, we cannot err, nor wander from God's Way.

As many as walk according to this Rule, Peace Gal. 6.
be upon them, and Mercy, and upon the Israel 16.

of God. So far as Men err from this Rule, in so far they don't walk with God. graceless and profane People, who live as they list, and in every Thing follow the Swing of their own corrupt Inclinations, are absolute Strangers to this Way of walking whereof I speak: So far are they from walking with God, that they walk directly contrary to him; for which he will one Day be avenged on them; if they hold on.

VII. If you desire to walk with God, study to be well acquaint with your selves. Every one of us should perfectly know our selves; what are our several Tempers, and what are our Distempers: We should know what Sins our natural Constitutions incline us to, and what Sins our respective worldly Callings cast in our Way; and these should above all others be carefully avoided: We should know what Graces are weakest in us, and what Graces we have the most frequent Occasions to exercise, and see to exercise them accordingly.

'Tis the Preacher's Observation, *That the* Ecc. 2.
wise Man's Eyes are in his Head; but the 14.

Fool walketh in Darkness. By the wise Man, here is meant, every one that understands his Interest, and honestly endeavours to do his Duty: Concerning every such Man he

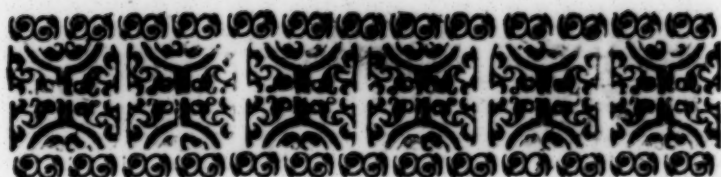
says, *his Eyes are in his Head* where they should be, ready to discover the Dangers that must be avoided, and the Advantages which he must improve. We should never have our Reason to seek when it is to be used, but look about us continually, that we may know where to step and where to stop: And truly they are the greatest Fools, who are ignorant of themselves, *for they walk in Darkness*, and are always at a Loss and at a Plunge; they are either so bewildered, that they know not which Way to go, or so embarrassed, that they can't go forward. I say then, let us be much in the Study of our selves; and for this End, let us often and seriously examine our selves, that we may know the true State of our Souls. Let us also learn to *walk circumspectly*, and to take good Heed both to the Way of our Hearts and Lives; and let us especially take Care to guard well our weakest Side; for here it is that *Satan* is most apt to assault us, and most likely to gain Ground upon us. And in one Word; let us watch against all our Sins, but especially, against *the Sins that do most easily beset us*.

VIII. Study to live much at the Throne of Grace; and be frequent and fervent in your Prayers to God for the continual Supplies of his Grace: For without these no Man can walk with God. Since the Way wherein we must walk is full of Difficulties, Temptations and Dangers, and our Strength is but small, let us call in the daily Aids of God's Spirit, that we may be enabled to hold on in our Way: And the more fervent we

we are in our Prayers, God will the more readily hear and answer us. There is indeed nothing necessary to a Christian, but what God has promised to him in his Word; and yet God requires that we should ply the Throne of his Grace for these Things: Nor have we any Ground to expect them from him without this. You may see what he says to this Purpose by the Prophet *Ezekiel*: For after he had promised a great many most valuable Blessings to his People, and ascertained them of them, he concludes with these remarkable Words; *Thus saith the Lord God, Ezek. 36. I will yet for all this be enquired of by the 37. House of Israel, to do it for them, &c.*

And thus I have shown you what are these Things that you must carefully avoid, and what are these Things that you must carefully practise in Order to your walking with God. It remains that you faithfully observe these Rules. And that you may be helped to do so, I shall shut up all with the Apostle *Jude's* Prayer Verses 24, and 25. *Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the Presence of his Glory, with exceeding Joy, To the only wise God our Saviour be Glory and Majesty, Dominion and Power, both now and ever. Amen.*





SERMON XI.

The Duty of Pilgrims and Strangers here on Earth.

P S A L. , CXIX. 19.

I am a Stranger in the Earth, hide not thy Commandments from me.

WHile we ate in this World, we should not reckon our selves at Home, nor should we think the World, or any Thing in it, our Inheritance : It is only the Place where we are to sojourn for a while, and then we shall be removed into our everlasting Habitation. *We have here no continuing City, nor certain Abode ; but are, perhaps, continually removing from one Place to another, and therefore 'tis certainly our Interest, after the Example of the holy Patriarch Abraham, the Father of the Faithful, To look for a City which*

Heb. 10.
11.

hath Foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God. So long as we are on Earth, we are in

a

a State of Probation; and according to our Behaviour now, so will it be with us for ever in the World to come. You see this holy Man *David* wisely considered his present State and Quality, and was desirous to act his Part aright in the World, that he might have the Approbation of God, and the Testimony of a good Conscience: *I am a Stranger in the Earth, hide not thy Commandments from me.*

In which Words you have these two Parts. (1.) *David's* humble Acknowledgment of his own Condition in this World: He owns himself to be *a Stranger in the Earth*. All the Saints confess themselves to be such, and study to behave in all Respects accordingly. What the Author to the *Hebrews* observes concerning the Old Testament Believers, *That they confessed that they were Strangers and Pilgrims on the Earth*; the same is true also of the New Testament Believers: They look upon Heaven as their Home, and their Inheritance; they long to be there, and they make it their chief Business to prepare for it. They know this World is only the Place where they are to sojourn for a short Time, and then must leave it for ever: And therefore they sit loose to the World, and to every Thing that's Earthly, that they may with more Seriousness and Diligence apply themselves to the Concerns of another Life. *David* had as large Possessions in this World as the most Part had, yet you see he did not consider himself any otherwile than as a Stranger in it. (2.) You have here the earnest Request this holy Man made to God,

upon the Consideration of his present Condition: *Hide not thy Commandments from me.* As if he had said, let me never know the Want of thy Word, but as long as I live here, give me Grace to be growing in Acquaintance with it, and to live in a near Conformity to it, as one that looks for a better Country, after he has finished his Course in this.

The Words being plain and easy in themselves, I shall insist no further in the general Explication of them, but proceed to discourse more particularly concerning these two Branches of the Text. And as to the first of them, *David's* humble Acknowledgment of his Condition in this World, he (as all the Saints do) look'd upon himself as a Stranger in the Earth, and one that was travelling into another, even a better Country: This is their Quality here; and they own and believe it. In treating upon this Subject, I shall under the Divine Conduct,

I. *Condescend upon two Things briefly, which will shew you the vast Difference between the Saints and other People, tho' both are Strangers in this World.*

II. *I must speak a few Things by Way of Advice and Direction to such of you as look upon your selves to be Strangers in the Earth, and Travellers towards Heaven, to forward you in your Journey.*

III. *Speak some Things by Way of Comfort and Encouragement to you, under all the Difficulties and Inconveniencies you may meet with in your Way thither.*

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As to the First of these; The Wicked indeed are Strangers in the World, as well as the Saints: But then,

First. They are not so in their own Opinion. They entirely take up with the World, and please themselves with the Gratifications of Sense: Like the rich Glutton in the Parable, who, when the World in a Manner roll'd upon him, insomuch that he had no Room where to bestow his Fruits: He resolves immediately *To pull down his Barns, and build greater, and there to bestow all his Fruits and Goods,* After which he began to sing a Requiem to his Soul: *Soul, take thine Ease, eat, drink and be merry, for thou hast much Goods laid up for many Tears.* Poor Wretch! he did not mind Heaven, and the Concerns of another Life: He look'd upon himself to be at Home in this World, and desired no other Happiness than the Earth could afford; he laid up all his Treasures here, and let out his Affections only and wholly to Things below: Here did all his Desires and Projects terminate, and he sought after no other Felicity than what his sensual Enjoyments brought him: He indeed laid in plentiful Provision for his Body, but in the mean Time neglected his precious and immortal Soul, suffering that to starve; as if the Soul could feed upon, or be nourish'd with the Husks of this World. Worldly Men trust to their Wealth; they depend upon it, they solace themselves in it, as their Portion and Happiness, and they foolishly think they need no more. You'll see how the wise Man Solomon Characterizes worldly minded People: *The rich Man's Wealth (says he) is his strong*

Luke 12.
18, 19.

Proy. 11.
11.

City, and as an high Wall in his own Conceit. The Godly are not so: They never reckon themselves at Home while here, for they know they belong to another, even a better Country; They consider the Earth only as the Place where they are to sojourn for a short Season, and must quickly be gone out of it, never to return again; and therefore they consider all their earthly Comforts to be meer Shadows and Vanities, which they must soon part with, and they study to live above them. They are crucified to the World, dead as to all the Enjoyments of Time, and indifferent as to every Thing that is earthly and perishing: They are (to speak with the Apostle)

Col. 3. 1. risen with Christ, and seek those Things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right Hand of God: They set their Affections on Things above, not on Things on the Earth.

Secondly. Wicked and worldly Men are not Strangers in this World, in Reference to Heaven, as the Saints are. They have no Right to that incorruptible and undefil'd Inheritance which is above, neither do they make it their Business to come there, nor to prepare themselves for it: Their Thoughts and Cares are otherwise employ'd, even about the poor empty perishing Trifles of this World, that can neither profit nor deliver their Souls; and when they die, they go to the Generation of their Fathers, where they shall never see the least Glimpse of Light, nor have the least Degree of Comfort and Joy, but be condemn'd to utter Darkness, and to endless Sorrow and Torments. But, I say, 'tis not so with the Saints, they are Strangers here in a Reference to Heaven which

is indeed their Country and Inheritance, and there they long and desire to be : Their Treasures, their Hopes, their Hearts, their Desires, their Husband, their Head, their God, their Conversation, their All is there ; and they are daily preparing and fitting themselves to go there also : They drive a daily Trade with Heaven, seeking heavenly Things, selling all for the Pearl of great Price, and carefully improving all their Seasons for Heaven. *They are dead, and their Life is hid with Christ in God ;* and therefore they hasten to be in a Readiness to enjoy that blessed Life. They study to have *their Loins girded about, and their Lights burning ;* and to be like unto Men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the Wedding ; that when he cometh and knocketh they may open unto him immediately. Col. 3. 3. Luke 12. 35-35.

As for the Things of this World, they know they are but Vanity of Vanities, and have learned to despise them, as Things that are not really worth their while to concern themselves much about : They consider what the Scripture teaches us, *That we brought nothing into this World, and it is certain we can carry nothing out : And therefore having Food and Raiment let us therewith be content.* Whatever their outward State is, they learn to sit down satisfied with it, as that which God sees best for them : They know (with the Apostle Paul) how to be abas'd, and they know how to abound ; every where, and in all Things they are instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer Need. As to every Thing that concerns them in the World, they are entirely satisfied that God treat them as he pleases, verily believing

believing they shall want nothing that he sees good for them ; and they shall meet with nothing, but what shall, through his Blessing, issue in the Advantage of their Souls.

The next Thing in the Method is to lay down some Directions. And now, do you really look upon your selves to be Strangers in this World, and Travellers towards Heaven? Then to forward you in your Journey, take these following Directions.

First, You must take special Care that you travel in a right Road. Don't imagine, that the heavenly *Jerusalem* is like the Cities of this World, that have sundry different Roads leading to them: No, there is, I assure you, but one Road or Way to Heaven, neither is there so much as a Possibility of getting there in any other Way but this ; and that is the Way of serious Religion. Any other Way you can go in, will lead you down to the bottomless Pit; because the Scripture assures us, that

Rom. 12. *without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord.* We
14. had indeed once lost the Way to Happiness, and that was by the Fall of *Adam*: And verily we had never been able to discover the Way again, but had been plung'd in everlasting Destruction, if God had not been graciously pleased to point it out to us. How thankful then should we be to him, that he has not left us to grope in the Dark for the Way, but has made our Way so plain and patent to us in his Word, that he who runs

Prov. 15. *may read it. Solomon observes to us, that The*
19. *Way of the slothful Man is as an Hedge of Thorns ; but the Way of the Righteous is made plain.* The Meaning is, they that are spiri-
tually

tually indolent and slothful, think the Way of serious Religion and Holiness is full of Intricacies and Difficulties: But then those Intricacies arise, not from any Thing in the Nature of Religion, but from their own Aversion to it; they have really no Mind to Religion: And therefore, to excuse themselves, they pretend, I know not what Difficulties. But the righteous Man, that honestly desires and endeavours to do his Duty, by the Grace of God, finds his Way both easy and pleasant to him; and truly the more we accustom ourselves to walk in this Way, our Work will become the more easy to us, and we shall take the greater Pleasure in it; according to that Observation of Job's, *The Righteous also shall hold on his Way, and he that hath clean Hands shall be stronger and stronger.* Job 17: 9.

Secondly, Beware of By-roads that will carry you out of the right Way. You'll, no doubt, meet with many Things to divert you from the right Path; for there are in the World, even in the Day wherein we live, many By-paths, both in Point of Principle and Practice, which may prove ensnaring to you, if you are not careful to avoid them. This present Age is very fertile of such Principles as sap the very Foundation, not only of Christianity, but even of natural Religion: Some Men of profane Spirits doing all they can to dispute and Banter every Thing that looks but like Religion in the World; whilst others deny the Lord that bought them. And what Abominations there are in the Lives of many among us, he is blind that does not see. And therefore you had Need to look well to yourselves,

2. selves, and carefully observe that Apostolical Rom. 12. Precept, *Be not conform'd to this World*; that is, beware of being ensnar'd either by the corrupt Principles or Practices of the degenerate Age wherein you live; and see that you walk circumspectly as to both. Be very accurate and exact in the whole Tenor of your Conversation, keeping close to the Rule of God's Word, as a sufficient Directory in all Matters both of Principle and Practice; otherwise you will soon fall off from the right Way, and then you may wander both long and far in these By-paths. Beware of Self-confidence; lean not to your own Understanding; have a constant Jealousie of your selves; and beware of every Thing that may prove an Occasion of wandering.

Thirdly, Disburden your selves of every Thing that may incommode you in your Journey to Heaven. There are two Things especially, that very much hinder People in this Journey; both which you must be careful to disburden your selves of.

(1.) Disburden your selves of all inordinate Love to the World, or any Thing that's earthly: For too great Anxiety and Concern about secular Affairs exceedingly incommodes People in their Journey to Heaven. If you have your Hearts set upon the World, 'tis but very slow Progress you can make in the Way to Heaven: Or rather you can't at all walk in that Way; for the World is too heavy a Burden for any Man's Back that would travel in this Road. The less your Hearts are set upon the World, you will make the more quick Progress in your Journey, and your

your Journey will be the more easy and comfortable to you. And what is there, I pray you, in the World to be fond of? Or, can you carry any of your Creature-comforts into the other World with you? Or, supposing you could, of what Use could they be to you there? But besides, consider how suddenly you may lose all your earthly Comforts, or how quickly you may be taken from them: For what *Solomon* says concerning worldly Riches, is true of all other earthly Comforts; *They many Times make themselves Wings, they fly* Prov. 23. *away as an Eagle towards Heaven. Why then* ⁵ *will you be the Fools (as he there adds) to set your Eyes on that which is not?* I say then, let us cast off all Earthly-mindedness, if ever we intend for Heaven: For this one Thing has made many grow weary in their Journey, and give it quite over. *Demas* is a lamentable Instance of this; concerning whom the Apostle *Paul* complains thus: *Demas hath forsaken* 2 Tim. 4. *me, having loved this present World.* You see ^{10.} this Man's immoderate Love to the World made him forsake the right Way, in which he once seem'd to have set fair out. And the same Apostle observes also, that *the Love of Money is the Root of all Evil, which while some coveted after, they have erred* (that is, they have been seduced) *from the Faith, and pierced themselves through with many Sorrows.* What have we, that are but Strangers in the Earth, to do with earthly Things, when we can't but know, that our Stay here will not be long?

(2.) Men's Sins exceedingly incommode and unfit them for their Journey to Heaven; and therefore you must disburden your selves
of

of your Sins as much as possibly you can. So long as a Man is under the reigning Power and Dominion of Sin, he can't so much as move one Step in this Way: Therefore you must see to get Corruption daily more and more mortified; and I assure you, the less Corruption you have, your Journey will be so much the more easy and successful. Follow the *Apostle's* Advice to the *Hebrews*: Let us lay aside every Weight, and the Sin that doth so easily belet us, that we may run with Patience the Race that is set before us. Every Sin is a Weight and Burden: And as a Man, that runs a Race, or walks a Journey, carries as little Weight about him as he can, lest he should weary and faint by the Way; so let us take Care we have as small a Load of Sin as we can, lest we be thereby unfit for our Christian Journey: Especially let us take Care to have our beloved Sins mortified: because these do, more than any other Sins, unfit us for this Work, and incommode us in it.

Heb. 12.
1.

Fourthly, Never be so Foolish, as to sit down upon your Attainments, how considerable soever they may be; but study to grow in Grace, and thrive in every Part of Religion. Study to grow more and more Holy and Self-den'y'd; more and more Spiritual and Heavenly-minded; more and more Obedient and Dead to the World; more and more Watchful over your Hearts and Lives, more and more Spiritual and Lively in Duties; more and more Patient under Afflictions, and the like. Never be the Fools as to imagine, with the Church of *Laodicea*, that you are rich and increas'd with Goods, and have need of nothing: Do not

Rev. 3.
17.

not say with the young Man in the Gospel, *What lack I yet?* Never dream that you have already attain'd, or are already made perfect: For if any Man think so, 'tis most certain he, as yet, hath attain'd to nothing in Religion. So long as a Man stands still, or sits down in a Journey, as long does he stop himself: And so long as we sit down upon our Attainments, we but retard our selves in our Way to Heaven. And therefore, as the *Apostle* Heb. 6. 1: directs us, *Leaving the first Principles of the Doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto Perfection.* And let us follow the same *Apostle's* Example: *Brethren, I count not my self to have apprehended; Phil. 3: 13-14: but this one Thing I do, forgetting those Things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those Things which are before, I press toward the Mark, for the Prize of the High-Calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

Fifthly, Look up continually to God for Direction, and depend upon him for Strength to hold on in your Journey: for in that Way wherein you are to walk, you will need a Guide to point out the Way to you, from Time to Time, lest you should mistake your Way; and likewise you'll here need a Staff to lean upon. What is it that makes the *righteous Man to hold on his Way, and him that hath clean Hands to wax stronger and stronger?* I assure you, 'tis through the vigorous Actings of Faith, and Dependence upon God, that this is brought about. Christ says *without me ye can do nothing.* John 15. 5. The gracious Soul sometimes meets with such Difficulties in his Way to Heaven, that he is exceedingly difficulted what Course to follow; but he looks up to God for Counsel and

and Conduct, and then, *he who leads the Blind in a Way they know not, leads him in those Paths wherein wayfaring Men, tho' Fools, shall not err.* Keep your selves therefore under the constant and commanding Influences of Grace, if ye would hold on: For so long as the gracious Soul is under these happy Influences, he moves vigorously in his Christian Course, and will not weary; but if these Influences are at any Time under a Suspension, he moves but slowly, and makes but small Progress in his Way. Thus, for Example, *Peter* could at one Time, at Christ's Command, come walking to him on the Sea; But at another Time, when he wanted the same Divine Assistance, a very easy Temptation overcame him, and brought him to deny his Lord and Master. Let me therefore beseech you to keep close to Christ by Faith; that you may get daily Supplies of spiritual Conduct and Strength, and then you shall be able to go on in your Way rejoicing.

Sixthly, Long and hasten to be at your Journey's End. The Road we should all travel in leads to Heaven: This is *that Rest* Heb. 4. 9. *that remaineth to the People of God:* Neither can our Happiness be compleat untill we come there. As 'tis pleasant and refreshing to the weary Traveller, after the Labours and Fatigues of a tedious Journey, when he arrives at his own Home, then to rest himself; so when the Christian is toil'd and wearied with working, and running, and with striving and wrestling, with struggling and fighting. O how pleasant and refreshing will it be, when he comes to the Possession of his promised Inheritance,

heritance, where he shall for ever rest from all his Labours, and reap the blessed Fruits of all his Prayers and Tears, and of all his Fastings and Sufferings? If indeed gracious Souls *had only Hope in this Life, they were of all People the most foolish as well as miserable: But* it is not so; for their Felicity is reserved principally for the Life to come: *In my Father's* Joh. 14. *House (says Christ) are many Mansions, if it* 1, 2. *were not so, I would have told you: I go to prepare a Place for you. And if I go and prepare a Place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto my self, that where I am, there ye may be also.* I say then, let us hasten, in the Use of all those Means we enjoy, to be prepared for the full and immediate Enjoyment of God to all Eternity: For the sooner we are ripe for Heaven, we shall the sooner get there.

Seventhly, Be very cautious what Company you choose to travel with, lest ye fall into such as will betray and deceive, or mislead you. As much as possible, shun the Company of graceless and profane People: For to be sure these are not travelling in the Way to Heaven: On the contrary they are walking in the broad Way that leads to Destruction, and therefore very unfit Companions for you. If you allow your selves familiar and frequent Converse with them, perhaps you may learn some of their Ways: As *Joseph*, tho' a good Man, by being a long Time in the profane Court of *Pharaoh* King of *Egypt*, began to learn some of the fashionable Vices: He learned to swear *by the Life of Pharaoh*. If we Gen. 42. *desire to walk in the Way that leads to Hea-* 15. *ven; let us associate our selves with those that*

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are

Pfal. 16. 3. are travelling that Road : *Our Delight should be with the Saints, those excellent Ones in the Earth* (as the Psalmist calls them.) We may receive no small Help and Comfort from their Prayers, and from their Example and Instructions : But as for wicked and ungodly Men, they may well hinder, they can never further us in our Christian Journey. David had observed what pernicious Influence the Example of wicked Men had upon many ; and therefore resolves to prevent the like Mischief to himself : *Depart from me* (says he) *ye Evil-doers, for I will keep the Commandments of my God.* You see he resolves to keep God's Way ; and in Order to this, he charges all profane People to keep out of his Company.

Pfal. 119. 115. *Eightly*, Lay your Account sometimes to meet with deep and rugged Ways in your Journey : I mean, with many Difficulties and Discouragements, and with much Opposition. You must lay your Account with the Cross, and expect many sore Tempests and Blasts of Afflictions and Temptations, you'll meet with many furious Assaults from the Devil and the World, that are confederate with your Lusts : They will be perpetually way-laying you, and using all their Art and Policy to rob and destroy you if they can. I suppose 'tis on Account of these Dangers and Difficulties, that the Way to Heaven is in Scripture called a *Strait and narrow Way* ; that is, a Way that will cost you no small Labour and Toil, before you will be able to make your Journey good through it.

Matt. 7. 14.

And thus I'm naturally led to the other Head I promised to speak to ; and shall therefore

fore lay before you some Things by Way of Comfort and Support, to encourage you under all the Difficulties and Disquietudes you may meet with in your Journey to Heaven.

First, How many Things soever you may meet with to discourage you, and whatsoever Wants you may at any Time be reduced to, consider you have a City to come, and a City whereof you are Free-men, being *Fellow-Citizens with the Saints*; if you are really the Disciples and Followers of our blessed Lord and Redeemer, you are of the Household of God, and therefore may expect that City which is the *New Jerusalem*, where dwell the General Assembly and Church of the First-born, whose Names are written in Heaven: And the Citizens of this City have such noble Immunities and Privileges, as will sufficiently ballance all you can meet with here. What tho' your outward Condition be mean and low in the World? And what tho' it be never so full of Crosses and Difficulties? If you are the Sons of God, ye may say with the Apostle *John*, *It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.* ^{1 Joh. 3.} It you are the Heirs of the heavenly Inheritance, what tho' you should be reduced to a Morsel of Bread, and a Cup of Water? Even that will be sufficient to bear your Charges home to your heavenly Father's House, where there is *Bread enough and to spare.* And what tho' you should be exposed to the Hatred and Persecution of cruel and ungodly Men for a while? Your Warfare will quickly be at an End, and then you

shall enter into the Joy of your Lord; where all Tears shall be wiped away from your Eyes, and ye shall be for ever above the Reach of all your Enemies. Heaven will make a full Amends for all you can meet with here: Nay, the more Discouragements and Troubles you meet with now, Heaven will be the sweeter to you when you come there.

Secondly, God hath made sufficient Provision for you by the Way, both as to Temporals and Spiritualls. As to Temporals; *Your Bread shall be given you, and your Water shall be made sure: You shall have such a Portion of the good Things of this Life as God sees best for you; and who would desire more or better: And whatever Creature-comforts God shall think fit to bestow upon you, you shall be sure to have his Blessing with them, which will make all your Enjoyments sweet and pleasant to you. But as to all that concerns you in this World, you must entirely refer your selves to the wise Providence of your heavenly Father: And well may you do it; For the Earth is the Lord's, and the Fulness thereof, the World, and they that dwell therein:* And therefore want who will, none that truly love and fear God shall want any Thing that is necessary for them.

Psal. 24.
1.

And then as to Spiritualls, your Provision is large and copious: For ye shall be fed with the rich Dainties of Heaven; ye shall be satisfied *[with the Goodness of God's House,* and ye shall be filled with all spiritual Blessings in heavenly Places in Christ Jesus, whereby your Souls shall be kept in a thriving Condition. Even in the Midst of your outward

ward Troubles and Wants, you shall have such Joy and Comfort, Such Peace and Satisfaction, as will at once ravish and nourish your Souls: And these are such as never any worldly or sensual Man felt: *The Comforts of God shall delight your Souls*; and these are such Comforts, as he bestows upon none but his own Children and People; *For a Stranger intermeddleth not with their Joy*. You that have *tasted that the Lord is gracious*, and have had Nearness with him in Duties and Ordinances, what think ye of the Pleasures of Religion? Is there any Thing in the World comparable to them? Surely no. Well then, this is Part of your Provision by the Way; and let this support you under all the Discouragements that you shall meet with in this Valley of Tears. The Use that the Saints should make of their Experiences of God's Goodness to their Souls is, in the Day of their Darkness and Trouble, to *remember the* Psal. 77. *Tears of the right Hand of the Most High*, and 10. to comfort themselves with the Consideration of what God hath done for their Souls in former Times: This will prove an excellent Cordial to them in the greatest Extremity or Distress they can be in.

Thirdly, All the Crosses and Trials ye meet with in your Journey to Heaven shall be sanctified to you: For Christ by his Death and Sufferings, hath sanctified a suffering Lot to his People, and taken the Sting out of all their Troubles; so that they can't do them any real Hurt: And therefore you may safely encounter all the Difficulties and Inconveniencies you may meet with, be, they

never so sharp, and be they they never so many, nay, be they of never so long Continuance. Never then be dismayd at your Crosses, but welcome them all, as what will most assuredly turn to your Good. O what Advantages and Privileges have the People of God above all others? And O how great every Way, *is the Gain of Godliness.*

Fourthly, Wheresoever ye go, or whatsoever God calls you to, you shall have his gracious Presence with you: For he has promised never to leave his People, nor forsake them; and how blessed they are that walk with God, who can sufficiently declare? If you keep God's Way, he will be always at Hand, ready to support and supply you: So that you need not be dismayd at all the Powers that can be engaged against you, for he is able to defend you against them all. Are you Weak? He can strengthen you: Are you destitute of Friends to take Part with you, and to appear for you? He will be a Friend, to stand by you; he will be your fast Friend that will never fail you, and he will be a most steadable Friend, *a Friend that's nearer than a Brother*, and will be infinitely more helpful to you, than all your Friends in the World can be. Are ye ready to sink under the Burden of your Afflictions? Are you like to be overwhelm'd with 'em? *He will uphold you by the right Hand of his Almighty Power.* Are ye assaulted with Temptations? And are these Temptations so violent and furious, that you are afraid, you will never be able to stand your Ground against them? Trust in God, and *his Grace shall be sufficient for you.* Nay, what tho'

tho' you should be banished into the most remote and desolate Corner in all the Earth? Even there shall God be with you; and his gracious Presence will fully ballance every Inconvenience even of this Kind. What made Paul and Silas to sing Psalms and rejoice, when Acts 16. they were shut up in close Prison, and their 26.

Not made fast in the Stocks, knowing nothing but to be led out the next Day to a shameful Death; I say, what made them so cheerful even in those melancholly Circumstances? I assure you 'twas nothing but God's gracious Presence with 'em. And what made many of the Martyrs to sing in the Midst of the Flames? 'Twas the same gracious Presence.

Fifthly, Your present Condition will not continue long. My Meaning is, the Days of your Sojourning will be but few at most; they will soon be at an End. And surely, since you have such noble Provision by the Way, such desirable Company to travel with: And your Journey will be but short, you may well bear contentedly all the Fatigues and Inconveniencies you can meet with; especially considering, that *there remaineth an excellent Rest to the People of God*, when they come to the End of their Journey. Now there is a Four-fold Rest remains to the People of God, when they have finished the Days of their Pilgrimage here, and when their Warfare is accomplished, which I shall only name. (1.) A Rest from all Labour and Toil: No more travelling, no more working and fighting, no more striving and wrestling, when they come to Heaven. *Blessed are the Dead that die in the Lord; for they rest from their Labour and their*

Rev. 14.
'3.

Works follow them. The Saints have indeed a troublesome and fighting Life of it, so long as they are in this World; but Heaven will for ever put an End to all their Troubles. (2.) A Rest from all the Oppression and Injustice of their Enemies: No more Hatred and Persecution, no more Reproaches and Calumnies, no more bloody Battles and Conflicts with the Powers of Darkness; no more Strugglings and Wrestlings with their Lusts and Corruptions, when they enter into the heavenly *Jerusalem*: For the very Remains of Corruption shall then be quite abolished, and they shall have no Occasion to complain of a Law in their Members, warring against the Law of their Minds. (3.) A Rest from all Passions and Perturbations. *No more Sighing and Sorrowing*, no more Tears or Grief, no more Cries or Complaints, no more Doubts or Fears concerning their State, when once they are entered into the Joy of their Lord; all *Sighing and Sorrowing* shall then flee away, and all *Tears* shall be wip'd from their Eyes, and their constant Employment shall be, to sing *Hallelujah* and *Blessing and Honour and Praise* unto him that sits on the Throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever. (4.) There's yet a Rest far better than all these, even a Rest from Sin, and from all Temptations to Sin, a Rest from the Drudgeries of *Satan*, a Rest from the Winnowings and Bufferings of *Satan*, a Rest from the Accusations of *Satan*. When the Saints come to their promised Inheritance, they shall sin no more; for they shall be made perfect in Holiness, and shall be put beyond a Possibility of Sinning, and they shall be infinitely above

bove the Reach of a Temptation. Then shall they be made perfect like unto Christ, for they shall see him as he is.

And thus I have finished what I intended to say from the first Branch of my Text, *David's* acknowledgment of his Condition in this World; and shall now proceed to consider the second Branch of it, namely, the earnest Request he put up to God, upon the Consideration of his present Condition: *Hide not thy Commandments from me.* And here I shall only show you, what I humbly conceive *David* is asking from God, when he puts up this Request to him; and then apply. And,

First, When *David* prayed, *Hide not thy Commandments from me*, I conceive he desires that God might make his Word a Guide to direct him in every Step, and especially in every Difficulty in his Pilgrimage. They that are Strangers in any Place, and know not the Road they are to travel in, have need of some to point out the Way to 'em from Time to Time, lest they wander, and miss the Place they intend to go to. 'Tis so with them that look upon themselves to be Strangers in the Earth, and Travellers towards Heaven: They have a continual Diffidency of themselves; they dare not trust to their own Wisdom and Conduct, nor lean to their own Understanding. They are afraid lest at any Time they be led aside into false and crooked Ways, which would take 'em off from the Path that leads to Heaven; and therefore they earnestly desire a sure Guide, that they may safely trust to, as one that will not deceive nor mislead them. God has given us his Word, that infallible

fallible Rule both of Faith and Practice, to point out the Way to us; without which the most eminent Saint on Earth, and they that have the largest Measure of spiritual Wisdom, would, on many Occasions at least, be plunged into inextricable Difficulties: But God hath, in his blessed Word, directed us how to behave in every Relation and Condition of Life we can be in. So that when *David* says, *I am a Stranger in the Earth, hide not thy Commandments from me*, the Meaning is, Lord I'm here in a strange Country, and tho' thou hast given me thy Word to direct me in my Way, yet I will certainly in many Instances mistake my Way, unless thou be graciously pleased to cause me to understand my Duty, that I may do it; and to understand what is Sin, that I may faithfully avoid it. You'll find this same holy Man *David*, in another Place, declaring how useful God's Word had been to him, in keeping him from the Snares of Satan. By the Word of thy Mouth, (says he) *I have kept me from the Paths of the Destroyer, The Word of God is a Lamp unto our Feet, and a Light unto our Path*, to direct us in the right ordering of our Conversation, both in the Choice of our Way, both in the general, and in the particular Steps we are to take in that Way, that we may not take a false Way, nor a false Step in that Way. And a very dark and uncomfortable Place indeed had the World been without this Light. The written Word of God is a more sure Word of Prophecy, than an immediate Voice from Heaven; *Whereunto we do well that we take heed, as unto a Light that shineth in a dark Place until the Day dawn, and the Day-star arise in our Hearts.*

Secondly,

Psal. 117. 4.

Psal. 119.
105.2 Pet. 2.
19.

Secondly, He is here praying that the Word of God might be a Guard as well as a Guide to him during all the Time of his Sojourning here in this World. They that are travelling in a 'strange Country, especially if it is a place infested with Thieves, Robbers and Murderers, had need to be very cautious, and by no Means travel alone, nor without Arms. This is the Condition of the Saints and People of God while they are in this World: Here they are not only in a strange Place, but in the Country of their Enemies, where the Devil, the World, and the Flesh are continually way-laying them, seeking to rob and murder them, to spoil 'em of their Graces and Comforts, to undo them quite if they can; and the more Grace a Man has, *Satan* will be sure to create him the more Disturbance. Is it any Wonder then, if the Saints are very desirous of a Guard to defend them from the Wiles and Assaults of their Enemies? *The Devil is continually walking about like a roaring Lion seeking whom he may devour.* ^{1 Pet. 5. 8.} The Meaning is, he is most diligent, and uses various Means and Methods, sometimes turning one Stone, sometimes another; sometimes he takes us up into a Mountain, showing all the Kingdoms of the World, and the Glory of 'em, and promising to give us all these, as a Sign of his infernal Bounty, if we'll fall down and worship him: Sometimes again, in his Temptations, setting us upon a Pinnacle of the Temple, that we may cast our selves down, by the Pride of our Duties and Attainments. Again, sometimes this old cunning Serpent speaks to us in the Language of Nature, *Master spare thy self*; and anon, in the Language

Language of the Scripture ; Thus and thus it is written: In all this to devour us ; or, as the Word in that forecited Text signifies, to *drink us up at one Draught* ; as if he lived upon Blood, and no Blood but that of Souls could quench his hellish Thirst.

Eph. 6.
16, 17.

But the Word of God is one of the best Guards, one of the surest and strongest Defences we can have to secure our selves against the Assaults and Stratagems of this restless and cruel, this subtle and powerful Enemy. Hence the Apostle *Paul*, in the Description he gives us of the several Parts of the Christian's Armour, which he would have every one of us take to our selves, and carry always about with us, makes mention of *The Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God*. Now you know a Sword is a Weapon which has a double Use : For we may either act offensively or defensively with a Sword, as we shall find Occasion ; we may with a Sword either defend our selves, or annoy our Enemies. By the *Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God*, our blessed Saviour both defended himself, and foiled *Satan*, when he assaulted him with his black and horrible Temptations in the Wilderness ; thereby, in a Manner, sanctifying this Part of our Armour, and letting us see how serviceable it may be to us, if we have but the Wisdom and Skill to manage it aright. So that when *David* prays, *Hide not thy Commandments from me*, he is begging of God, that he would be graciously pleas'd to learn him how he might, to his best Advantage, make use of the holy Scriptures for his own Defence

fence against all the Enemies of his Salvation, and maintain what God had already wrought in him.

Thirdly, He is here praying, that God's Word might be his Companion, all the Time of his sojourning here on Earth, and travelling towards Heaven. Men that are travelling in a strange Country are glad, when they can find a faithful Companion, in whom they may safely confide, and with whom they may trust their nearest Concerns, to travel with. And can they that are travelling to *Zion*, have a more proper, or a more fit and useful Companion in their Journey thither than the Word of the God of Truth? You may safely confide in this Companion, as one that will never deceive nor mislead you: For here, as in a spiritual *Map* or *Chart*, God has pointed out the Road to Heaven, and described every Step of it; so that, if you have this Companion with you, and carefully follow its Directions, you cannot go out of the Way, for the Word of God will, in every Case, faithfully tell you what is Duty, that you may follow it, and what is Sin, that you may eschew it. There's not a Case wherein the Scriptures of Truth will leave you at an Uncertainty, what Course to follow: There is not a Providence you meet with; there is no Condition of Life you can be in; there's no Temptation nor Difficulty you can encounter, but this faithful, this trusty Companion will direct you how to carry. It, at any Time, all seems to be dark and gloomy about you, take the Advice of this Companion, and your Doubts shall be quickly remov'd, your Darkness scattered, and your Way made clear

clear to you : It is therefore the Interest of all that intend for Heaven, to be well acquainted with the Word of God. *David* elsewhere Pfal. 119. tells us, *That God's Testimonies were his Delight and his Counsellours.* They were the Men of his Council; nay they were his Cabinet Council, with whom he advis'd on every Emergent, and whose Advice he faithfully followed. So that when *David* prays that God might not *hide his Commandments* from him, 'tis the same as if he had said; Lord, give me such through Acquaintance with thy Word, and Wisdom to follow its Directions, that I may in every Step of my Life, and especially in all my Difficulties, be govern'd by this faithful Companion and Counsellour.

Fourthly, He is likewise here praying that the Word of God might minister abundant Comfort to him under all the Discouragements and Afflictions he might meet with in his Pilgrimage here in this World, which is at best but a Valley of Tears to the People of God: Even such Comfort as might be sufficient to carry him to the Land of perfect and eternal Comfort. You know Travellers sometimes meet with many Things to disturb and afflict them; and they, almost every Day, stand in Need of something to cheer and keep up their Spirits, that they may be encouraged to hold on in their Way. 'Tis so with all that are travelling towards *Emmanuel's Land*: There's not a Day in which they stand not in Need of some Cordial, to revive their drooping Spirits, that they may be helped to advance cheerfully in the Way of Holiness; and there's nothing more ready to supply them

them with solid and substantial Comfort in all their Experiences, than the Word of God, which is stored with Variety of exceeding great and precious Promises for this very End; that God's People may have the daily Comfort of them, as their various Circumstances require: And they can never fail of suitable Comfort, if they have the Divine Art of applying these Promises to themselves.

What would the People of God many Times do, if they had not the Promises to lean to? verily they would be quite ruined, their Spirits would be overwhelm'd, and they would never be able to bear up under the great Load and Pressure of their Afflictions. Now there's a great deal of spiritual Skill and Wisdom required in making a seasonable Application of the Promises of God's Word to our selves, according as our daily Occasions render necessary: To have this Divine Wisdom and Skill, I suppose, is one Thing that this holy Man *David* is here praying for, and he had this his Prayer answered. Hence you'll find him elsewhere in this same *Psalms*, declaring how useful the Scriptures had in this Respect been to him: They ministred suitable Comfort and Support to him in all his Troubles and Calamities, which, I assure you, were various and very sharp. Yet hear what he says in Commendation of the holy Scriptures. *Unless thy Law had been my Delight, I should then have perished in mine Afflictions.* *David* was frequently under such extreme Distress, that he was almost ready to give up all for lost, to look upon himself as quite undone, and to abandon himself to Despair:

Psal. 119.

92.

spair : but God's Word, that never failing Source of Comfort, always yielded him abundant Matter of seasonable Support ; and this was the only Thing, which, through the Blessing of God, kept up his Spirits. When all outward Comforts failed him, he had abundant Encouragement from the Word of God : From these Fountains of living Waters, he drew daily Comfort to himself, when the Cisterns of the Creatures were either broken, or dried up. A Bible is a pleasant Companion at any Time, and especially in Times of Afflictions and Trial. So that when he prays, *Hide not thy Commandments from me*, 'tis all one as if he had said ; Lord, let me have Comfort in the Promises of thy Word, sufficient to answer my daily Necessities, and to support me under all the Discouragements I have yet to encounter, during the Time of my Pilgrimage here on Earth ; and, Lord, learn me the necessary Art of applying these Promises on every Occasion, and seasonably to my Condition ; so that I may more and more experience the singular Usefulness of thy holy Word.

Fifthly, I humbly conceive *David* is also here praying, that, by the Word of God, he might be prepared for his Removal out of this World to Heaven : *I am a Stranger in the Earth, hide not thy Commandments from me*. As if he had said, I am nothing but a Stranger here, I must sojourn in this World for a little Time, and must be gone shortly, I know not how soon : Therefore give me Grace to understand thy Commandments, and to obey them in every Thing ; that by
this

this Means, I may be made ready, and prepared for my Departure hence. We are all Strangers in the Earth, as well as *David* was, how little soever the most Part of us think so, and consider it: And to make our selves ready for leaving this vain World, should be the grand Work and Business of our Lives; our Time should be principally spent in making speedy Preparation for it, because we know not how soon, or how hastily God may call us hence. Now there's no other Way for us to be prepared for Death, and to be qualified for Heaven, but by a faithful and conscientious Performance of those Things that God hath required of us in his Word; for if we diligently do what he has commanded, and mourn for our daily Shortcomings; In this Case we are ready to remove out of this World when ever he calls us. *And blessed is that Servant who, when his Lord cometh, shall be found so doing: For he shall enter into the Joy of his Lord.*

God has liberally furnished us with the Means of making our selves ready for our Departure out of this World, and none of us can be so ignorant or unthinking, as not to know, that we are not always to remain here: So that when he calls us hence, if we are unprepared, we are altogether unexcusable, and we have none to blame but our selves. What, I pray you, are you spending your precious Time and Strength about? Why are you so earnest for the vain Babbles of this World? Must ye not soon go hence, and leave them all behind you? And have ye not Things of far greater Moment to
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 mind,

Matt. 16.
26.

mind, even the great Concerns of your precious and never-dying Souls? Why then do ye neglect these Things that ought to be minded before all Things? Do you think your Souls not worth caring for? Or are you resolved to perish for ever? *What will it profit a Man if he should gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul? Or what shall a Man give in Exchange for his Soul?* I beseech you therefore, seriously consider what you are doing, and stand not all the Day idle, and unconcerned about your Souls, as if ye had no other Thing to do in the World, but to eat, and drink, and sleep, and recreate your selves: Act like rational thinking Creatures, and not like the Beasts that are not capable of any other Happiness, but what consists in gratifying their Appetites: Pray with *David* in the Text, *Hide not thy Commandments from me.* Is it not high Time for you to awake, and to mind the Things that concern your Peace? Think what you can answer to God, when he shall call you to give an Account what you have been doing these so many Years you have been living in the World; and consider how miserable you shall be if ye continue in your Negligence.

And so I proceed to the Application of this Subject, which I shall discuss in one Word of Exhortation very shortly. Let me from hence intreat all of you, to be much in the Study of the holy Scriptures. They are the Word of the great God of Heaven and Earth, and concern us very nearly, for they contain the *Word of eternal Life.* From
what

what I have been but just now discoursing of, you cannot but see how exceeding useful they are to us every Way: For besides that they are a perfect and compleat Rule, both of Faith and Practice (an Argument which should be very prevalent with us) I say, besides this, and many other very weighty Considerations, which I have not Time here to insist upon, if you be well acquainted with the Scriptures, they will be a Guide to direct you, a Guard to defend you, a trusty Companion to bear you Company, an inexhaustable Spring of Comfort to cheer you in all your Calamities, and an excellent Means to prepare you for your Removal out of this World, and to qualify you for the eternal and immediate Enjoyment of God. And now can there be more powerful Arguments to induce us to any Thing than these are? And can you be better employed, and more for your Comfort and Profit, than in the constant and serious Study of that which will be every Way so very useful to you? And truly you will be but sorrily guided, unless you have your Directions from the Word of God; you will be but weakly guarded, unless the blessed Word of God; be your Defence, and a Part of your Armour; and what Comfort. can you expect under all your Troubles and Calamities, unless you have a Right to all the Promises of the Word? And how can you be prepared for Death, Judgment and Eternity, unless you be acquainted with the Divine Precepts, and are so wise as to observe them punctually? They that are well acquainted with the Scriptures, and

have the Savour of the Knowledge of all Divine revealed Truths upon their Hearts, will be able to manage themselves in a Way that's pleasing to God, in every State and Circumstance of Life; whereas they that are ignorant of these, or have not a right Taste of them, will be continually plunged into such Difficulties and Perplexities, as they will not know what Hand to turn themselves to, or how to extricate themselves from them.

Now, the Way for you to be well acquainted with the Scriptures is, to read them daily, and to read them with a serious Attention, to meditate frequently upon them, and fervently to pray that God may anoint the *Eyes of your Understanding* with his *Eye-salve*, and make you *know the Mind of the Spirit*. No Man can pretend he wants Time for these spiritual Exercises: If you are but willing, be your Business as to worldly Things what it will, you'll find some competent Time for these Duties. *David* had as much, and as important Work upon his Hand, as any of you all; and yet he found Time for Reading, Prayer, Meditation, and the like. But then you must know, that 'tis not the bare literal and notional Knowledge of the Scriptures, that I am here pressing you to; not such a Knowledge as will fill the Head, but that which will at once affect the Heart, and have an universal and powerful Influence upon the Life. We should with *David*,

Psal. 119. Hide God's Word in our Hearts, that we may not sin against him. And with *Mary*, we should

Luk. 2.51. treasure up all Christ's Sayings in our Hearts.

If we follow these Examples, we shall as Scribes ready instructed for the Kingdom of Heaven, be able upon all Occasions to bring out of the Treasure of God's Word, Things new and old, which will tend both to our Direction and Consolation. So that you see how beneficial the Scriptures are in every Case to a Christian.

But it is most sad to consider, how many there are among us, that know nothing even of the History of the Bible; and far less do they understand any Thing of the Principles of our most holy Religion, that are taught in it; or of the Precepts and Directions that it lays down to us: Even under the Means of Knowledge, do they live in gross Ignorance of those Things that are absolutely necessary to be known, in order to eternal Life: Nor will they apply their Minds, nor be at any Pains to get Knowledge, but live contentedly ignorant of *the Things that belong to their Peace*. They live in as great Unconcernedness, as to the Affairs of another Life, as if they were Brute-beasts, and had not immortal Souls to care for, and that ly at the Stake. O what a fearful Reckoning will such have? If they continue in their Negligence and Ignorance, it had been better for them, they had never been born. Let me therefore beseech you, in the Bowels of Jesus Christ, and as you tender the Wellfare of your own Souls; as you regard your present Comfort, and future Happiness, awake from your Security, lest you sleep the Sleep which is unto Death; and bestir your selves with all Diligence and Application, to the

Psal. 95.
7, 8, 11.

the Study of serious Religion, and to know the Things that belong to your Peace in this your Day, before they be hid from your Eyes. Let me seriously address you in the Words of the Psalmist, To Day, if ye will hear God's Voice, harden not your Hearts, lest you provoke him to swear in his Wrath, that ye shall never enter into his Rest. And truly if ye neglect so great a Salvation as is now in your Offer, your Condemnation will be most certain, and most dreadful.

I shall conclude this Discourse with the Words of the Apostle, Rom. 16. 25, 26, 27. Now to him that is of Power to stablish you according to my Gospel, and the Preaching of Jesus Christ (according to the Revelation of the Mystery, which was kept secret since the World began, but now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the Prophets according to the Commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all Nations for the Obedience of Faith) To God only wise, be Glory through Jesus Christ, for ever, Amen.

3 NO 63

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